SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

NO. 426. FOR WEEK ENDING FEBRUARY 27TH, 1897. [ONE PENNY.

IT

was said of the first Napoleon that one of the canons by which he regulated the correspondence of his high office was this: "A letter that is not answered answers itself." And in many instances this is, no doubt, true. "Silence," we say, "gives consent." Often, again, it means refusal. Much depends on the form of the appeal; and much on the relative positions of the two parties to the communication.

REALLY

business-like people, however, in business affairs, will seldom adopt any of these formulæ of indifference, whether of princely or popular origin. A neglected letter is, in some respects, like a neglected chill, or a neglected headache, or a neglected physical ailment of any kind. Each of these, indeed, is a message—a message from Nature. And it

DOESN'T

do to trifle with her communications. She is too powerful, and we are too puny; and, when our indifference ruffles her, she has a way of calling us angrily to account. A post-card will often answer a long letter: "A stitch in time saves nine," and attention to a slight physical ailment, or apparently trivial obstruction, may alike save unnecessary suffering and useless regret.

MATTER

in the wrong place, is a famous definition of "Dirt." Equally is it true (very often, at all events) of Disease. A sluggish liver, an impaired circulation or recurrent indigestion; a bilious attack or a sick headache; nervous disorders and functional irregularities—each of these is often simply caused by "Matter in the wrong place." Of each how often has one heard it said: "It really doesn't matter!" And yet they all do: they are "Matters that do matter!" They are Nature's *MESSAGES*; and one of the best specifics—one that is always found to *ANSWER*—is a timely purifying dose of **Beecham's Pills.** They are to be had of all Chemists; so that, for the purpose, at all events, of obtaining a supply, wherever you may happen to be

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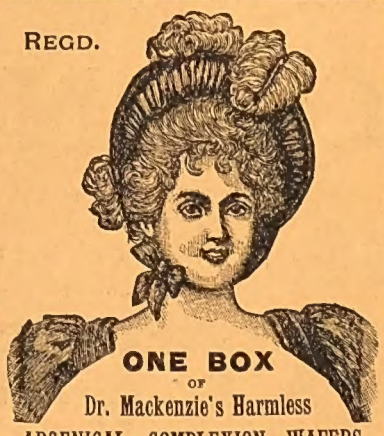

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SHORT STORIES

No. 426] For the Week ending February 27th, 1897. [ONE PENNY.

UNAWARES.

WHEN I was introduced to her, I was standing in the balcony of the swimming tank at Santa Cruz, watching the "greenery-yellery" water beneath, and the black human frogs awkwardly gambolling therein. I dislike being introduced to people at or in swimming tanks, but as Mrs. Richbody introduced her, I had to be civil. (Mrs. Richbody has a very good cook—much better than the chef at the hotel where I am staying.)

So I found her a chair, and we sat down.

Out of the corner of my eye I saw her hitch her chair a little closer to mine as she adjusted her skirts.

Before she had spoken six words I murmured to myself: "Ah, that explains it. You are a German."

"Explains what?" she asked sharply.

"You are a German," I repeated. "Pray go on. I am interested in your remarks."

"Most foreigners take me for French," she said.

I merely smiled, and dropped the ashes of my cigar into the upturned eye of my tailor in the tank below, who had had the impertinence to forward me his little account from the city.

"Most foreigners," she repeated.

Caroline frowned, and made a delicious little pucker in her white forehead. (I call her Caroline now; all this was five days ago.)

"The best blood you have is German," she said.

"I think not," I replied; "my grandmother was a Frenchwoman."

"So was mine," she said softly.

The silence was broken only by the barking of a human seal in the tank below—a poor imitation, and much more vulgar than the original.

At length Caroline: "I'm sorry you dislike the Germans."

"I don't. As individuals, I have many friends among them, but as a nation——" I blew a light whiff that vanished into thin air.

"You're not very entertaining or very complimentary; indeed, you're rather rude, and I think I'll go," she said.

She rose and gave her dress a shake.

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"Don't go," I said mildly. "I said nothing——"

"I agree with you," she answered cheerfully, and sat down again with a satisfied smile.

Now, I confess, that just for a moment I felt foolish. Never a man, never a child, and seldom a woman, has made me feel foolish. And this woman *had* made me feel foolish—for a moment. I was annoyed, and, I fear, showed it, for I gave a little start (I was so surprised at her audacity, you know), and dropped my lighted cigar into the swimming tank. It fell on the bald head of my tailor (Stultzwurzel), and made him call out. That was some satisfaction.

"I think we'd better go and take a turn on the beach," said I, rising; "the air seems warm and stuffy here."

"Not at all," she replied, settling back snugly and tapping the toe of a very small tan slipper with the parasol.

"It seems very comfortable here to me. But, perhaps, you suffer from headache?"

"No," said I; "that's not the trouble. My nose is out of joint."

I was proceeding to light a fresh cigar when she interrupted coolly:

"I don't like smoking, Mr. Legend."

I looked at her in amazement.

"But you are German," I said; "surely all Germans——"

"Have you ever been in Germany?" she asked.

Now here she had me again. No, I have never been in Germany, but I wasn't going to confess it without a struggle, so I evasively replied: "I have been in Schleswig-Holstein."

"That's hardly Germany" (this rather disdainfully).

"I'm glad to hear you confess it," said I; "I've always maintained that Schleswig-Holstein is a piece of Denmark which the Germans stole."

"It's false," she burst out with flashing eyes. "Ever since the time of Charlemagne, Schleswig-Holstein has been—but what's the use of arguing with you? You're prejudiced, with French blood in your veins, and you'll never appreciate the Germans."

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"I think more of them than I did ten minutes ago," said I, gazing at her admiringly. Her colour had risen with her excitement, and with the heel of that little tan slipper she was vehemently beating the floor.

"Thank you," she said, recovering her good humour. (There's nothing fetches a woman like a compliment.) "And, after all, Mr. Legend, it's a matter of perfect indifference to me what you think about the Germans."

"Quite so," said I. "But I like to get at the truth on any subject I investigate, and as you seem well posted, perhaps you'll let me come round this evening and get some more information from you."

"I don't know about that on such short acquaintance," she said. "Nobody's vouched to me for your respectability, and one meets all kinds of queer people at the seaside."

I pointed to Mrs. Richbody, who was on the floor just below us, anxiously watching her only boy take a swimming lesson.

"If that lady vouches for me will you let me come?"

"Of course; I'm staying at her house."

"Mrs. Richbody," called I.

"Yes," replied the anxious mother, with one eye on her darling.

"Am I respectable?"

"What?"

"Am I respectable?"

Little Algernon Richbody gave a yell as he lost his footing in two feet of water and disappeared. His mother screamed also, only louder, and I could get no attention until Algernon had been hauled up from the bottom and carried off howling to his dressing-room.

I hate small boys. What they were ever made for, I can't imagine. Small girls have some *raison d'être*. They may grow up to be pretty women.

Mrs. Richbody came panting up the stairs, and I repeated my question.

"Respectable? Why, yes; as much so as any of my cousins, I suppose," she said.

Caroline turned her head away quickly. I thought she even blushed, but she has such a fine colour, anyway, that I couldn't be positive of this.

"May I come to dinner this evening?" asked I humbly.

"Nobody's vouched to me for your respectability."

Mrs. Richbody glanced at Caroline and smiled. Caroline gazed steadily at the tank below, and I believe Stultzwurzel thought she was smitten with him, for he immediately attempted a double somersault dive and landed flat on his stomach. This idiotic caper splashed the green water all over the new coat he had just made for me, and I vowed I wouldn't pay him for a year.

"You told me yesterday you were going to Oakland this afternoon to attend Mrs. Moneyton's garden party," said my cousin.

"That was yesterday," said I.

"Then my chef is away for a week's holiday, and no dinner that Bridget could cook would be any attraction to you."

"You seem to think it's chiefly the dinner that brings me to your house," said I crossly, for by this time I was aware that Caroline was smiling—and not at the tailor.

"You've often said so yourself," replied my cousin in a plaintive tone. "I'm sure whenever you come I always try to have that white soup you like so much. But Bridget can't make it."

"Oh, confound—excuse me—bother your dinner," said I, now desperate; "I can get white soup—such as it is—at the hotel. I want to come and dine with you to—to study German."

"Get a grammar," suggested Caroline.

"One can't get the pronunciation from a book," said I. "To catch the true inspiration of that glorious tongue, one must have the living teacher."

"I don't know," said Mrs. Richbody doubtfully; "you certainly don't deserve to come, but I'll leave it to Caroline. What do you think, my dear?"

Caroline hesitated. My heart sank to my boots and I felt the queerest little dryness in my throat. The human seals stopped barking as if by pre-arrangement, and there came a moment of complete quiet, such as sometimes occurs amid the noisiest scene. In the silence I heard Caroline say softly, but very distinctly, "I think we might let him come."

As I said before, that was five days ago. And she now calls me Tom.

L. Du Pont Syle.

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MY FAMILIAR AND I.

I possess a Familiar. This is much more satisfactory than to be possessed by one, as some of my friends seem to be. I acquired my Familiar in India, where they are wiser than we in many things, though we do not believe it.

But how, or where, or when, I came by this person you will not care to hear, for you will smile at my preface as well as at my story. He showed me many strange things in this world and the other, and proved himself such an amusing and devoted friend that I would not have exchanged him for an angel. Since I became his owner, I have eschewed society to some extent, finding no one more entertaining than my invisible imp of darkness, but this evening the whim took me to return to some of my old haunts. A card for a reception at Mrs. X——'s lay on my dressing-table, and I rose and got into my evening clothes about half-past nine, much to my Familiar's displeasure.

"Why not take me?" he suggested. "If you will let me go, I will give you a rare treat. Listen—here's a bargain. Each person whom you see I will show you in a veritable scene in his or her past. Come. I've done nothing so good as this for you. It will pay you to take me! You will have a succession of surprises. You know you enjoy new sensations, and as for myself I have seen nothing of society here, and I doubt not I shall feel as thoroughly at home as if I were down below."

I took him. As he belonged to me, and was in a measure my slave, he would have been obliged to stay behind had I willed it otherwise, but, feeling in just the mood for the kind of entertainment he promised me, I acceded. I cherished few illusions about my friends, and I could dispense with what I had left. They are uncomfortable property, anyway.

The rooms were crowded, as usual. Mrs. X—— always has a crush. She is a pretty, plump little woman, with a caressing smile and—but why describe her? You know her, as does everyone. I made my way to where she stood, by a big palm, in a dainty white gown, which had, however, to my surprise, long sleeves to the wrist. I say to my surprise, for Mrs. X—— has a famous arm, if I might say so, and she is very proud of it.

"You are looking at my ugly sleeves!" she cried, with a beaming smile. I held her pretty fingers in mine as I greeted her. "Is it not wicked? That stupid John spilt a cup of hot bouillon on me at lunch, and my poor arm is frightfully scalded. It may be cruel, but I dismissed him. I simply cannot keep the clumsy creature after this last exploit."

Suddenly Mrs. X——, smiling, faded away, and I saw her in a *négligé* in her dressing-room, her white face distorted with fury. Her husband's hulking figure was just passing out of the door, which crashed loudly behind him. She turned up her sleeve slowly from the wrist. On its white surface were the purple marks of brutal fingers.

And then Mrs. X——, waving her great fan of snowy ostrich feathers, stood by me again.

The Familiar laughs. I hear him distinctly, but I——

"Are you ill?" asks Mrs. X—— solicitously; "pardon, but you seemed so white just then—perhaps the heat——"

"Yes, it is the heat," I reply hastily; "if you will excuse me one moment, I think I will go out in the air."

"I like society," said my Demon blandly in my ear; "let us go in society often, will you? I have not seen so many people I could take to my heart since we came over."

I made no reply. I fancied I was hardened and cynical enough to meet any such revelations with composure, if not, it was time I should be.

Returning to the drawing-rooms, I was buttonholed by my old friend S——. He was excessively gay, and looked prosperous. "Well, where have you kept yourself?" said he; "I want you to come down to Guildford and dine with me on Sunday. I tell you I have the sweetest wife and baby in the world. Want to show you the boy. Why didn't you marry, yourself? Oh! there's nothing like marriage, old fellow. Yes, the world uses me finely—making lots of money. Ta-ta till Sunday."

A moonlit sleeping-room. A little child crying long and loudly in its cradle. A woman's form lying, half-dressed, with flushed face, across the bed. A brown stream of brandy from an overturned decanter trickling across the carpet.

Not at present, S——. No marriage for me. And my Demon echoes sagely in my ear; "No marriage for you!"

What? There in the chair, talking to a bejewelled, bewigged old dame, is M——, stouter than of old, but with that same air of perfect rectitude, that expression of dignified frankness that is so engaging; and, after all, a bank manager should be a portly, solid-looking gentleman to inspire the trust and respect of depositors. I will go over and speak to him.

Before I can reach him, he is in a small, dark room with heavily-barred doors: the safe is open, he is fingering a pile of envelopes irresolutely; his face is sickly, yellowish, evil. So, so. The die is cast, and my dear M—— is no longer an honest man. . . .

No. I stop in disgust. I do not care to grasp his hand in mine. I will go home. I have had enough of my fellow-men. Bah! I loathe them all—all! Let me get out of this—the sooner the better.

"Oh, do not go home," pleads my Demon plaintively. "I was just beginning to enjoy myself so thoroughly! This is a great city, and I tell you I never met pleasanter people at home. Don't go yet, there's a good fellow!"

But I turn resolutely, sick at heart. In the hall I catch a glimpse of myself in the great mirror, and pause. I am ghastly white, which is not, perhaps, strange, and—*what!* . . .

She is lying prone on the polished floor, senseless from the blow of my cruel words, in the circle of light cast by the rose-shaded lamp, and I—I pause to look at her just one moment, and then I turn like a coward and steal away.

We got home somehow, my Demon and I. He has been trying to console me. He tells me it is much pleasanter here than in some places, but my pistol is lying temptingly close to my hand on the table, and I rather think before dawn that I shall have left life and, perhaps, my Demon both behind!

Annie Aldrich.

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Among my dearest memories of Italy is that of the evenings I used to spend in Venice with the Cavalier Cicogna, as he was known upon the stage. We usually sat in the garden of the Osteria until late into the night, sometimes *tête-à-tête*, sometimes in the company of old Captain Amati.

Here one could sit quite cool and comfortable, and, when the moon came up over the tall chimney-pots and its silver lines threaded the dense mass of leaves and tendrils and dallied with the bottle of dark Trentino which stood on the mottled marble before us, this very garden became a little world full of poetry. Then was the place well suited to the tales of the Cavalier Cicogna.

One which he had told us repeatedly, as was his custom, ran as follows:

"Are you familiar with Farli? No. Well, it does not lie on the regular route of tourists, and I am not surprised that you are not acquainted with it. But you know it by name, captain, do you not? And you have no doubt heard of Signor Campobassi—but only casually, eh? I knew him well. He was a very agreeable comrade, and it grieved us all to lose him. The ladies adored him, for he was a slender, finely-formed fellow, with the most beautiful eyes in the world, and a moustache, as if the Madonna herself had meant him for a tenor. We men liked him because we had in him a true friend, and one who always stood ready to help with his purse or his dagger, and who had no trace of haughtiness about him, although he was the favourite of the public. He was one of those exceptional men who have not an enemy.

"But I forgot. Farli is in the vicinity of Rome, at the foot of the Abruzzi Mountains, a small but rich and very flourishing town. It was in the fifties that I went thither with a newly-formed company.

"Farli had a very spacious new theatre. We pleased the public, did a thriving business, and, accordingly, were well suited to stay there. But it was our *primo tenore*, Signor Campobassi, who awakened the most interest. Our impresario smiled contentedly whenever he chanced to mention him, and said, with a knowing look: 'That was the best hit I ever made.' I can still remember well to what straits he had been put for a tenor. He refused to lay out much money for one and tenors, as a rule, are high in their prices. Then, one day, as we were sitting in the café, Campobassi appeared, inquired for the director, and asked him to try his voice. He said he was a peasant's son from the neighbourhood of Areggo, but even as a child he had had such an ear for music that he knew by heart all the airs he had ever heard. It was the opinion among his acquaintances that he could sing finely, and so he had thought that he might make his fortune in the opera. Now he had heard that Signor Mario was looking for a tenor, and so he had made haste hither to offer himself.

"Our impresario was a cunning fox and shook his head gravely at this. 'It would be a great deal of trouble to coach you,' he said. But Campobassi replied that on this account he would be content with a very small salary.

"Signor Mario still shook his head, but he took up his glass, contemplated for a while the dissolving bits of ice, and finally drank the remainder of his sherry with an air of decision.

"'Well, we will try it,' said he. 'Colleagues, if you have any desire to be present at the rehearsal, follow me.'

"We were all curious enough, so we started for the theatre in spite of the midday heat. There Campobassi sang a couple of airs from the most familiar operas, and the more he sang the more significantly did Mario wink at us. His fat, round face fairly shone and glowed for joy; nevertheless, at the end he said rather coolly: 'You will make us much work, Campobassi, but I will give you a trial.'

"As a matter of fact, the trouble he made us was very slight. He had such an extraordinary musical ear that he retained correctly the most difficult passages if they had been sung before him only once. In addition, he had a natural facility for acting, so that he was less awkward than many tenors of long experience. It is true his performance lacked artistic finish; but the crudities in his singing were atoned for by the stupendous "material"—a voice which surmounted everything and was yet of the purest and most beautiful quality. Such a tenor had not been heard for many a day in Farli, and people thronged the theatre only for the sake of hearing him. Campobassi was soon the idol of the

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Farlese. If two men were found quarrelling anywhere, one might be sure that Campobassi was the subject of the dispute; and if a maiden, lost in reverie, appeared to see nothing, one might stake one's life that she was all the while seeing and hearing Campobassi.

"One forenoon, after rehearsal, we were sitting under the arcades of the Piazza dei Signori, drinking our coffee. We had been chatting about everything possible and impossible, and one of us at last turned the conversation to the subject of favourite parts. Each one named his own. I, 'Doctor Bartolo'; Pedrocchi, 'Rigoletto'; Mario said jokingly that his favourite opera was the one in which he had least to do; Campobassi was silent.

"At length we pressed him to confess his own preferences, but he shrugged his shoulders and replied, laughing: 'My favourite part? That is probably my own secret.'

"'No secrets amongst colleagues,' grumbled Pedrocchi.

"'No secrets?' was Campobassi's answer. 'Well, perhaps I will play you my favourite part to-night.'

"'Oh, the *Trovatore!*' we exclaimed, for we were to bring out the opera on that day for the first time in Farli. Campobassi shrugged his shoulders again, and we broke off the conversation at this point, as our *prima donna* came towards us under the arcades.

"On the evening of the same day, the *Trovatore* was placed on the boards. All that Farli possessed of aristocracy and distinction was present at the theatre that night. Not a seat was vacant. The great expectations which were cherished concerning Campobassi's performance were not disappointed. Here he could give himself free rein, and his voice rang through the house, not like a tenor—no, like a choir of tenors. The applause would not cease, and Campobassi was called out repeatedly.

"At last came the Stretta. Now the audience would surely be thrown into ecstasies; and we had not deceived ourselves. Wreath after wreath was flung from the boxes, all the people stamped their feet, clapped, and cried '*Viva!*' and '*Da Capo!*' Finally, Campobassi, smiling, made a gesture to signify that he would repeat the Stretta. The storm was laid, and it grew suddenly so still in the theatre that one could have heard the buzzing of a fly. We all stood there behind the scenes, and beheld Campobassi step forward to the footlights, a departure from custom which did not strike us oddly, for tenors are allowed many liberties.

"But what was that? He was saying something in an undertone to the orchestra, and the musicians, who had already begun the opening bars, broke off in their playing. Instead of the notes of the Stretta, we heard Campobassi speak—speak words which made the blood stiffen in our veins, which threw such a spell over us that we were unable to stir from the spot, long after Campobassi had finished his speech.

"I can remember it as vividly as if it had all happened yesterday. 'Honoured patrons and citizens of Farli,' he began—and probably at this point he made one of his consummately graceful bows—'I thank you for the affection you have shown for me; the more, since this is my farewell appearance. After to-night you will, I fear, hardly care to hear me again. I beg you will all remain quietly in your seats; for then, upon my honour, not a hair of anybody's head shall be molested. Any movement can only lead to mischief, for my men are patrolling the corridors and all the exits are guarded; nor can help come to you from the direction of the stage, for the enlarged chorus which has to-night sung so valiantly consists, for the most part, of my own people, and they also are well furnished with weapons

"'I am Fra Angelo, whom some call a brigand, and whose name is certainly well known to you. I, too, am armed, as you see, and these pistols are well loaded. But far be it from me to inflict any injury upon you who have shown me so much consideration—my word for that. At this very moment a member of the chorus has already taken our honoured impresario in charge; that I shall not exact tribute of my colleagues you will naturally infer. On the other hand, honoured patrons, I have often provided entertainment for you, and it is on that account justifiable that I should require some recompense from you—more especially since our impresario has paid me an honorarium which my sense of shame will not permit me to name. So have the kindness, good people, to deliver your watches, rings, chains, purses, and the like with all alacrity to those who will now pass from seat to seat.

"'The exits are guarded, as I have remarked before, and the more generously and quietly you perform your part the quicker will this business be accomplished. In the meantime I will ask the orchestra to play some favourite airs, which may serve as an agreeable distraction for those who have discharged their obligations.'

"In truth, the orchestra did commence to play, and, as we learned later, everything passed off as Fra Angelo had wished. As a matter of fact, all his threats had been superfluous, for the name of the famous bandit had alone sufficed to render everyone helpless.

"Fra Angelo supervised the entire transaction from the stage, said a few words of thanks when it was ended, then turned towards the flies. As he passed us he clapped me laughingly on the shoulder and said: 'Did I not tell you, Cicogna, that I should play my favourite part to-night?'

"With that he vanished, and we rushed terrified out into the open air. The audience streamed out at the doors in unwonted haste, the first among whom had already summoned the guardians of the so-called public safety. A few moments later troops trotted through the streets of the town, but of Fra Angelo and his men not a trace was to be found."

Emile Peschkau.

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PART 4,

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POST-CARD COMPETITION.

No. 6.

£2 2s. is offered to the reader who sends in, on the back of a post-card, the best four-line verse, each line ending respectively in "Meant," "Tories," "Bent," "Stories." Competition closes on Monday, March 1st.

POST-CARD COMPETITION RESULT.

No. 4.

£2 2s. has this week been forwarded to Mr. M. C. Craney, 129, Lillington Street, Pimlico, S.W., whose post-card bore the anagram: "Pearson do tip it to M.C.C."

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SUMMARY.

Prologue.—The Hon. Ernest Wentworth lies dying at his estate, Chisholme Park. His wife, a light, pleasure-loving creature, falls under the mesmeric influence of Armand Lemaitre, who, by force of will power, compels her to rob her husband. While in the act of extracting a bundle of notes from a bureau she is interrupted by the appearance of her husband, who enters the room in his bed-clothes, silently points at her with his fore-finger, and then falls down dead. She shortly after leaves for Paris to join Lemaitre.

Nineteen years elapse. Edith Wentworth, who was adopted when a baby by Lady Hilton, is living at Hillcrest Lodge. Among the guests for Christmas are Cécile Delisle, a school-friend of Edith's, Professor Queech, Jack Heathcote, and Captain Arthur Musgrave. At York, on the journey down from King's Cross, Cécile observes that the carriage next to theirs contains a man and a woman. At their destination, a few miles further on, she notices a strange man there alone.

Lemaitre, alias Dr. Danton, arrives at the house as a guest, and exercises an influence over Edith that arouses the jealousy of Arthur, who strikes Danton, and agrees to fight a duel.

CHAPTER III.

Cécile and Inspector Wheeler.

There was little doubt that a murder had been committed. The whole county of Yorkshire was in agitation about it. It was the theme of the local and of the London papers alike. Scotland Yard was at its wits' end. The whole thing was as mysterious as possible.

Here is an extract from one of the Yorkshire papers when the body was first discovered:

"Everyone living anywhere in the neighbourhood of either York or Seaborough knows Thorgill Beck. It is one of the biggest, the most dismal, and the most desolate of the great ravines which cut up the bleak, flat wolds into gullies between York and Seaborough. In it there appears to be only one inhabitant, the farmer, Wilson, whose finding of the body has now put his name into everyone's mouth. His little farm (if that can be called a farm which consists of little more than a thatched cabin and a few patchy acres holding sheep of the kind known as black-faced half-breeds) fills the valley. The farmhouse stands at a point not far from the spot where the piers of masonry and iron girders of the railway viaduct come down from a considerable height into the semi-darkness of the ravine. Assisted by his thrifty wife and a couple of young sons, Farmer Wilson manages to eke out a living by his half-yearly trips into the outer world behind a flock of the 'half-breeds' and his two sagacious collies. The gully is as wild and inhospitable as can be. Through it flows, from west to east, Thorgill Beck, a black, impetuous streamlet, usually strewn with leaves scattered upon its rough waters by the winds which howl down the echoing cleft. In the depths of the hollow, which is the habitation of the bittern, snipe, and wild duck, the vegetation is unusually rank, consisting of hazel-bushes and holly-trees, while over the banks of the stream droops the weeping willow. A few hardy firs, intermingled with an occasional bright-hued spruce, straggle up the slopes; but as the softer turf merges into the heather of the bleak moorland above, all trace of other vegetation dies away, and the brown and purple ling stretches away for miles over

A woman was lying dead on the borders of the stream.

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the wolds in one unbroken expanse of dull colouring, which wraps hill and dale in the same neutral tint.

"It was early on Christmas morning, on coming out to look after the sheep, that Farmer Wilson's youngest son made the ghastly find. He ran back and roused his father with the intelligence that a woman was lying dead on the borders of the stream. The farmer immediately went out and found the body lying half in and half out of the swollen and angry rivulet. On drawing her higher up the bank he found the head and face a mere featureless mass of broken bone and flesh, so that even her nearest relative would have been unable to recognise the lady. It was plain, however, from the character of her dress, that she was not a woman of the lower class, though, on the other hand, she had no jewellery upon her person. A handkerchief in the pocket of her torn and bedraggled dress bore the initials 'J. L.' The lady's neck was broken, as well as one leg and one arm.

"It is said that Scotland Yard is at present quite unable to account for the presence of the woman in Thorgill Beck. The broken and excoriated condition of her body may be explained on several hypotheses. She may have leapt into the streamlet higher up the Beck, and been dashed by the raving torrent against the rocks as it bore her down before depositing her on the land; or she may have been first murdered and then thrown into the Beck from its banks; or, again, she may have leapt, or been thrown, from the high railway viaduct above—though this supposition certainly seems wild. It has been discovered that there is no trace of poison in her stomach; that she was not shot; that there are no marks about the body pointing to the commission of a murder. There is, indeed, a deep cut all round her throat; but this has apparently been caused by the collar of her dress eating into the enormously swollen flesh of the throat, puffed out by her immersion in the water. This tragic affair remains, therefore, for the moment wrapped in perfect mystery."

So said the *Seaborough Post* in its issue of the 30th of December.

It was not till the fifth day of the new year that Cécile Delisle's eyes fell upon this report. She always had a liking for the reading of such details in the newspapers, and would often sit for hours over a few lines of a report telling of the tragedy of some life. Then, with the left eye quite shut, and the other looking far away with a strange intensity, she would grow forgetful of everything around her, till someone roused her from her reverie.

For the past few days she had been distracted by the great ball, and the whirl of gaieties at Hillcrest Lodge, and had not read a paper. She had put aside several, however, as they came in, with the intention of absorbing their contents when she found time. The ball was on the 3rd, and on the morning of the 5th she sat alone in the library, reading.

As soon as she had got to the end of the article in the *Post*, she rose, stood for a minute with her pretty brows knit, walked rapidly upstairs, along a corridor, and stopped at Lady Hilton's boudoir.

"Come in!" cried Lady Hilton in answer to her tap.

Lady Hilton sat before the glass, while a maid behind her combed down the long white hair.

"Why, you, Cécile, dear?" she said, drawing Cécile to her with her arm round her waist. In an incredibly short time the old lady had grown to love the girl.

"I want to know—something," said Cécile. "Tell me—what is the meaning of 'Scotland Yard'?"

"Scotland Yard, dear? Why, what a question! Isn't that where all the policemen and people live, Mary?"

Mary combing down the silvery fleece, said:

"Yes, my lady, I b'lieve so."

"That is it then, dear," said Lady Hilton. "The policemen live there."

"And the detectives?" asked Cécile.

"I should imagine so, dear. But why?"

"Nothing. I was reading about it, and wanted to know. Where is it?"

"In London, I think. It *is* in London, isn't it, Mary?"

"Yes, my lady."

"It is in London, dear."

On the opposite side sat Cécile.

"I thought so," said Cécile, "but I wanted to be sure. Good-bye."

She dropped a kiss on Lady Hilton's cheek, and was gone.

She returned at once to the library, took paper, and wrote:

Sirs,—I cannot write fluently English for a long time without effort, and do not mean to try. But if you send a detective to the over address where I dwell now, I think I can tell you something of the affair of Thorgill Beck which will interest you particularly.

Yours truly,
Cécile Delisle.

She addressed the letter to "The Detectives of Scotland Yard," put on a stamp, and went and dropped it in the letter-bag in the hall.

All that day and the next she was unusually silent, and Jack Heathcote, who came to her with the proposal that she should join a party going out skating on the lake in the park, received an answer which rankled in his bosom for hours.

"Englishmen have no idea what skating means," said Cécile.

"No—I suppose not—that is—no, I suppose that is so," stammered Heathcote. "In that case I shall stay behind."

"No, do not stay. There is Edith going, you see—and Captain Musgrave—and the Dr. Danton—and the Hon. Lily Grandcourt, and Lieutenant Pendragon; and there is Miss Newton looking toward you to be her escort. You are—what you call it?—'smitten' a little with Miss Newton, I think?"

"Ah—well—hardly that, you know. Fact is, I always had a fancy for Celtic ladies—French people, you know; and I think, if ever I marry——"

"Go—do," said Cécile. "Miss Newton is waiting for you. The Professor Queech cannot skate: you must take his place this once."

Jack moved off to Miss Newton, and Cécile took up her newspaper and walked to the quiet brown library.

She had not been sitting there half-an-hour, when a footman entered with a card. Cécile looked on it, and saw: "Inspector Wheeler, Detective Department, Scotland Yard."

"Let him in," she said.

She arranged two chairs, one on each side of a small table, and immediately afterwards the inspector was ushered in.

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He was a big, heavy man, with a clean, fresh face, thoroughly Saxon in colouring and cut. He was dressed in plain clothes, a brown tweed; and sat heavily in the easy-chair, twirling his hat.

On the opposite side sat Cécile, with her elbow on the table, her thumb under her chin, and her forefinger supporting her temple.

She began:

"Have you found out anything about the affair of Thorgill Beck?"

"Little or nothing, miss."

"You come from London now?"

"No, miss: from Seaborough. I was sent down to look into this matter, you know. They telegraphed to me from Scotland Yard that you might have information for me. That is why I am here."

"First of all, you will have some lunch, perhaps?"

"Thank you, no, miss. I have just had something."

"Very well. Then we will go into this affair together."

Inspector Wheeler smiled a little to himself. His intention was to obtain information, not to "go into the affair" with a young lady.

"You say you have found out 'little or nothing,'" Cécile went on. "What does that mean to say?"

"Well, you know, we have formed some sort of opinion about the case. But nothing more."

"You have seen the body?"

"Oh, yes."

"And where is it now, the body?"

"Why, buried, of course."

"So soon; in this cold weather? But I should like to have seen it!"

Inspector Wheeler's eyes opened wide. At her first question he had discerned that this was no ordinary pink-and-white young lady, but her *penchant* for seeing dead bodies surprised him.

"You are surprised, then?" said Cécile. "But why? A lady is not necessarily of wax, I think. I have seen dead bodies, many. You know the Morgue in Paris? I have seen them there. Twice, when I was a child at a convent school, I ran away to go to the Morgue. You should not be surprised."

"Well, miss, it is of no consequence. If you will tell me what information you have——"

"But first—is it too great a secret to tell me what 'opinion' you have arrived to?"

"Of course," said Inspector Wheeler, "it was either a murder or a suicide; and the fact that the body was robbed leads us to suppose that it was a murder."

"'Robbed,' you say?"

"Yes, miss."

"Of what?"

"Ah, that we don't know. But she was a lady, you know, her dress showed that; and yet there was not a single piece of jewellery found on her."

"But look at me," said Cécile; "I am a lady, yet I think you will not see a single piece of jewellery on me."

"Well, that is true, miss," said the Inspector ponderingly. "Of course, it is only a theory, you see. We are not sure that she was robbed."

"You *may* be sure, however," said Cécile quietly; "for she certainly was."

"*You* know that, miss?"

"Yes—I know."

"How, miss?"

"She had on a ring, a locket, a bracelet, and a gold watch, which have disappeared. Therefore I conclude, with certainty, that she was robbed."

"But, good Heavens, miss," cried Inspector Wheeler, "how do you know all these details? Did you know her when alive?"

"No. I *think* I *saw* her once, when alive; but only for a moment. I did not notice any of her jewellery. The details of the ring, the locket, the bracelet, and the watch I gather from reading the published facts."

"Well, that's more than any of us have been able to do, then. You ought to be a detective, miss."

"All detectives should be French," said Cécile.

The Inspector smiled.

"And they should all be women," proceeded Cécile.

The Inspector chuckled.

"And they should all, from childhood, be trained in a convent, where they rub with nobody but women," went on Cécile.

The Inspector roared with laughter.

When his merriment was over, he said:

"But about these rings and things—are you sure of what you say?"

"Quite."

"Then how, miss?"

"You had the lady's body in your hands," said Cécile. "You know that she was married."

"Oh, there is no doubt of that."

"Married without a wedding ring?" she asked, with lifted eyebrow.

"Ah, but that is no proof, miss, that she had it on at that time. Women, for instance, may pawn a wedding-ring."

"I know. But this lady had on a rich and fashionable dress. And she would have pawned her locket, or her bracelet, before pawning her wedding-ring. She had not, in fact, any pressing need of money."

"Well—I suppose you are right. But however did you know of the bracelet—and the—the locket? And—the watch?"

"Read this." Cécile handed him a paper some days old, and pointed to a sentence. The Inspector read:

"The fourth finger of the left hand as well as the right wrist were nearly bare of flesh."

"Yes," said the Inspector, "the fact is true enough as stated there. But the whole body was bruised by the rocks, you know. And it is only natural that one part should be more bruised than another."

"But the *peculiarity*, Mr. Inspector," said Cécile, leaning forward, "of those two parts being mentioned *together* as being specially bruised. The parts on which one wears the wedding ring, and on which one wears a single bracelet. One naturally concludes that the ring and the bracelet had something to do with the bruising—*if* she had on a ring and a bracelet. But we have already proved by a different line of thought that she did have on a ring. Therefore, Mr. Inspector, we must conclude that she had on a bracelet."

"Yes, miss—I see what you mean. I see it. That is certainly very clever thinking——"

"As for the locket," Cécile went on, "I can't think, really, how anyone could not guess that. She certainly did wear a locket. Think of that deep cut into the swollen neck. The papers say it was caused by the flesh closing over the neck of the dress. But a woman, surely, never could have thought so absurdly. The neck of a dress would never have had that effect. The deep cut was caused by a *string* tied round the neck, and something, you may be sure, hung by that string. That something was a locket."

"How do you know, miss?"

"Because I am a woman. I saw the lady, you know. She was French; if I know anything of people from their look she was, or had been, an actress. She had a light character. She was fond of jewellery. It was a piece of jewellery, a locket—certain."

"And how do you know she had a watch?"

"It is clear, Inspector, that *you* are not a woman!" laughed Cécile. "Don't I tell you she was fond of jewellery? That she had on a valuable bracelet? The first thing a woman fond of jewellery buys is a watch. If she has on rings, lockets, bracelets, you may be sure she had a watch before any of them. *Undoubtedly* the murdered woman had a watch."

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"Well, miss, you beat everything I ever heard," said the Inspector. "You know, then, that she was murdered?"

"Don't you?"

"I suppose so, now you have proved that she was robbed."

"But she was not robbed by the same person who murdered her," said Cécile.

"No? And how do you know *that*, miss?"

"It seems to me so evident! And evident from two quite separate considerations. In the first place, a person who murders another in the open air, and then robs that other, does it in a hurry, *always*. But this lady was not robbed in a hurry, you see."

"Is that so, miss?"

"But yes—it is so. One knows that from the fact of the handkerchief been found by you in her pocket—the handkerchief marked 'J. L.' The robber must have searched her pocket surely; he must have found the handkerchief, and taken it out, and finding it of no value, he actually took the trouble to replace it in the pocket. He was not a murderer."

Cécile, as she spoke, had that far-away look of scrutiny in the right eye, the left being almost closed, her face perking upward.

"Yes, miss—that certainly seems sound," said Inspector Wheeler. "I follow you at every point. And what is the other consideration, miss, by which you know that the murderer was not the same man as the robber?"

"The cut round the neck!" said Cécile, "the finger bare of flesh, the wrist bare of flesh. The string supporting the locket, which has disappeared, must have remained round the throat for some time after death in order to give time for the neck to swell round it. The finger, too, and the wrist must have had time to swell, for it was the effort to get the ring and bracelet off which tore away the flesh. She was robbed many hours after she was murdered."

"I follow you, miss. But, in that case, how do you know that she was murdered at all? She may have jumped into the streamlet of her own accord, mayn't she?"

"From where?" asked Cécile, with a quick glance at the Inspector.

"From the bank of the streamlet, miss, or from—from the railway viaduct."

"Not from the *bank*," answered Cécile, again with the far-away look. "for you say 'stream*let*,' all the papers say 'stream*let*.' 'Let,' I think, means 'little,' and 'stream*let*' means 'little stream.' The 'beck' is not a great rushing river. It would crush and bruise a body thrown into it from the bank, among the rocks in its course. But it would not have the power to snap the limbs. It could not break the neck."

"True enough," mused the Inspector, "true enough. But may she not have jumped from the railway viaduct?"

"Yes, that is where she came from, hence the broken limbs. But she did not *jump*. Do not think that. She was *thrown*—by a very great force—by a very strong man."

"You are quite sure of that?"

"Quite sure of *that*. It is perfectly clear. People, you see, when they are about to commit the suicide by leaping from a great height, leap *downwards* more than *outwards*. It is of the downwards that they are thinking. That is their aim. But this lady was shot far outwards—horizontally."

"I should like to hear your reason for thinking that, miss?"

"She was found near the wall of the viaduct, was she not?" said Cécile, "and she was half in and half out of the water, I think? But that was not the *position* and the *place* where she first fell into the ravine! She was *carried* there, from farther up, *by the stream*."

"How do you arrive at that, miss?"

"Oh, but that is clear, Mr. Inspector. Consider the swollen condition of her whole body, of every part of her, of her neck, her fingers. This was caused by the water. The *whole* of her must have been at one time under the water, and there for hours during the long night. The streamlet in bearing her down towards the viaduct must have jammed her against a rock, and kept her swinging there, *all* of her immersed for hours. But before morning she got free, and was flung half up on the bank. The point at which she first touched the stream was, therefore, a good way up from the viaduct. So she did not jump. She was *thrown* by a very strong man. She was murdered!"

Cécile looked round upon the Inspector, and smiled a sweet smile.

"Well, miss, all I can say is," said Mr. Wheeler, "that you have given us great assistance in this matter. The difficulty is to lay our hands on the murderer and the robber."

"The *robber*, at any rate," said Cécile, "is easily found."

"You don't mean Farmer Wilson, miss?"

"Yes, I mean him," nodded Cécile.

"Well, do you know, I had that very thought myself? But I assure you that you are wrong there. I have been to Thorgill Beck, you know, and seen Wilson. He is a most harmless, decent fellow—one of the religious sort. Of course I pumped him well, without accusing him straight out. But he hasn't the things, I assure you."

"Does no one live in the Beck but him?"

"No one, miss."

Cécile knit her brows.

"*Some* one has them, you know," she said.

"Well, that we will think out later on. Meanwhile will you tell me the actual information you have to give, of which you wrote to Scotland Yard?"

Cécile briefly told him of what she had seen in the train on the Christmas Eve—the woman draining the brandy-flask in the train, the bent back of the man in the waiting-room with the blood-red hairs of the rug on his light-coloured coat, the sound like a scream as the train dashed over the wolds in the falling snow, and the dark object that seemed to rush past the carriage window on the outside. Then she told of the journey's end; how at Seaborough she had looked into the window of the carriage which the French lady had occupied, and found it empty; then looked again, and seen a squat, heavy man, with bronzed face and long goat beard, in mean clothes, stand as if by magic there.

This was her story.

"Do you think," asked the Inspector, "that the big man who was with the lady could have got out at the little station between York and Seaborough without your seeing?"

"Yes—he may. And yet it is strange, too. I was not looking out, I think. But I was sitting near the window; I should have seen."

The Inspector rose to go, and bowed. Cécile held out her hand.

"Good-bye," she said. "You are sure you will not have some lunch?"

Mr. Wheeler declined, and retired backwards.

"And, Inspector," she called after him, "look out in your search for a *very* strong man—an unusually strong man! And get that locket—I know it will guide you." Then she added to herself: "Or, I think *I* shall get that for you."

Mr. Wheeler bowed and was gone.

CHAPTER IV.

The Duel.

Professor Queech found himself involved in a desperate affair. For the first time for forty years he felt that he was being distracted from the study of musical sounds. A hundred times a day he mopped with his handkerchief the beads of sweat on the top of his hairless scalp. Miss Newton, observing him, thought that he was screwing up his courage to the proposing point, but a far more momentous matter it was which was agitating the Professor—a matter which involved the life or death of two men.

Danton, not finding anyone else handy, had asked the

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Professor to be his second. The Professor had first been astounded, then indignant, and then had begun to preach; but, seeing the thing inevitable, had been attracted by the novelty of the situation, had felt his own self-importance inflated, and finally, with many murmurs, consented. He, the man of art and of science, and of peace, in his old age, was taking part in an illegal act.

So when Harry Pendragon presented himself on behalf of Captain Arthur Musgrave before Dr. Danton, Danton referred him to the Professor. And many were the formal interviews between Lieutenant Pendragon and Professor Queech.

"The final question to be settled between us," said Pendragon, at their last interview in the conservatory, "is the question of weapons."

"Ah, just so—just so," answered the Professor, mopping his scalp.

"You are the challenging party, you know," said the soldier, "*you* choose."

"Well, now—well—let me see," said the Professor, looking sideways and downwards through the corner of his eyes, "the question is, of course, which weapon is the least dangerous?"

"I cannot help you in your decision, sir."

"Well, well—no—I suppose not. This is a deplorable affair, Mr. Pendragon!"

"Pray, choose ——"

"A deplorable affair, sir. Between us now, talking as friends, can't we do something——?"

"I am afraid you are wasting both breath and precious time, sir," said the officer coldly. "To say that an affair is deplorable hardly makes it less so. Pray choose."

"Swords, now—cold steel—that I consider a most dangerous, a most dangerous weapon——"

"Do I understand you to choose swords, then? Very well, say swords."

"No, no; pray be not hasty, sir! I was remarking that nothing could be more hurtful than a weapon like the sword. The ingenuity of man in that respect has been appalling. There have been two-handed swords, double-edged swords, swords of every curve and calibre. With regard to two-edged swords, I can tell you a fact not, I believe, generally known——"

"But that is not the point——"

"No, sir; the edge, the edge. Two-edged swords, now——"

"Is it swords, then, Professor? All right, I agree."

"No, sir, I cannot but consider you precipitate in this matter. I did not say swords. Pistols, now——"

"All right——"

"The pistol. No one can deny that the pistol is a most deadly and diabolical contrivance. And here again the ingenuity of man has displayed itself——"

The Lieutenant beat his cane against the balcony with impatience.

"Professor, do you choose swords or pistols? I cannot stay here all day. We shall be observed. It must be one thing or the other."

"Well, say pistols—say pistols," cried the Professor in desperation. "The pistol is an engine that may miss its aim; the sword cannot."

Pendragon bowed, and walked away.

But both the seconds were equally inexperienced in the arrangements of duelling details. At nearly the last moment it was discovered that no one had thought of procuring a doctor to attend the spot. It was Professor Queech who remembered it. He ran at once to find Pendragon.

"Lieutenant," he said, "we cannot let them fight without a doctor, you know."

"No, certainly—that is a good thought," said the other. "What is to be done?"

"A doctor from Seaborough, now——" suggested the Professor.

"We mustn't think of that, sir! Remember that this is an illegal act in this country, and there are four people already in the know. We cannot admit any strangers. My principal would not hear of it."

"Then what are we to do? This may be a lucky occurrence. Here is the very loophole we might have sought out of this deplorable affair."

"It is singular that you should still be thinking of loopholes, Professor Queech!" said Pendragon; "our principals are not children, but men in earnest. With regard to the doctor business I think we had each better have a talk with our principal himself. I shall go now to the captain; you go to Dr. Danton; and presently we can compare notes."

It was then near midday. The duel was to take place at four in the afternoon.

* * * * *

All this time Cécile's brows kept knitting, knitting. What was there in the air? Those secret talks between Danton and the Professor, between Pendragon and Arthur, and, above all, between the Professor and Pendragon were all duly noted by those eyes that saw everything. The Professor and Pendragon! Had the hussar, then, suddenly taken an absorbing interest in the theory of musical sounds?

She knitted her brows. She looked thoughtfully upwards through one eye, but there was no clue to guide her to the truth.

She had a journey in her head, and on the first sunny day, when the frost was biting keenly in the pure air, she stood suddenly over Edith, where she lay reading a novel on a couch, bent down and kissed her.

"Bye! I am going to Seaborough!" she said.

"Cécile, dear! Why, how sudden!" cried Edith, sitting up. "And how *very* old-maidish you look in that broad seal cape, and those—you dear!—those old, torn gloves! If it were not for the sealskin cap, no one would suppose you a girl of twenty! You look like a little, dear, old Russian old maid—sweet, sweet Cécile!"

There was a long lovers' kiss, and then Cécile tore herself away and said:

"Yes—I am going—to Seaborough. One will be back soon to one's own love! The trap and John are waiting in the cold for me. Bye!"

"But what for, darling?"

"Nothing. Amuse yourself with the—you know who, I think—till I come——"

"Oh, here, Cécile, I say." Edith was up, and rushing after her in a moment. "Darling, what do you think he said to me just now?" She whispered into Cécile's ear, and they both laughed.

"Why does the goose not say that he loves you and be over?" said Cécile. "He lacks *la spontanéité!*"

"But, Cécile, he has known me for so short a period. One must have time, love."

"Bah! A soldier should be bold and abrupt. If he waits long, then will the huge doctor carry you off, wholly."

"Sh—h—h! you make me shudder, dear."

"My Edith! poor little one!" Cécile looked at her for a moment with a mother's pitying eyes, then waved her hand, and ran down the stairs to the hall.

As she entered the trap she saw Jack Heathcote standing a little way off on the lawn, eyeing her with hungry eyes. She called him with her hand. Jack came running up.

"You would like, I think, to come with me to Seaborough?"

Jack said a quick "Oh, rather!" to his knowing heart, and climbed to her side in the trap.

The horse began its run to Seaborough.

"You will have to spend some hours by yourself in Seaborough, waiting for me," said Cécile when they were halfway. "You will find it dull, I think."

"I? Not at all," answered Jack; "but are you going anywhere, then?"

"Yes—I am going on a short railway travel. You must

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not say anything of it to anybody at the Lodge. I have a reason for wishing it to be a secret."

"Oh, very well, quite so. But mayn't I come too?"

"No, sir."

And so Jack was left alone at Seaborough station, and Cécile sped alone westward in a train, until she reached the small station midway between Seaborough and York. Here she got out, and asked the station-master:

"Where can I get a carriage for the hire?"

The station-master sent with her a porter to a little tavern, where she soon procured a trap.

Having mounted on it, she said to the driver:

"How many miles to Thorgill Beck?"

"What, where the murder was done?" said the man.

"Yes."

"A matter of about nine mile, I should think."

"How long does it take?"

"There and back?"

"Yes."

"I could do it for you inside three hours."

"Very well. So we will be back here by half-past one." She looked at her watch. "Make your horse put his feet to the ground. I will pay you double."

They set out—through the town—then out upon the bleak and bitter wolds, Cécile's chin buried in her fur, her face screwed up shrinkingly at the bleak and parching wind. It was a hard and bold journey for her to take. And why did she take it? She hardly knew. Her stubborn, inborn inquisitiveness, and some deep instinct or presentiment which she could not fathom led her on.

The trap drew up at last at the top of a steep footpath covered over with stones and rubble which led down the hill-side. She got out half frozen.

"The path's rather steep, miss," said the driver, "take care you don't slip. Had I better come and help you down?"

"No, I will contrive," she answered. "Wait you here for me a quarter—half—an hour."

She jerked freely down the slope, and disappeared behind a bluff of rock. At the bottom she came to a fairly smooth path, winding among the bracken and heather along the length of the gully. Above, to the east, she saw the high railway viaduct, and toward this she walked some distance. Farmer Wilson's shanty was partly sheltered by the viaduct, and partly by a shoulder of the hillside, which retired a little at that point from the valley. The little house, with its one-slope roof, nestled sheer beneath the perpendicular rock of the crags. Cécile tapped at the door.

Farmer Wilson, with round blue eyes and open mouth, came at once, gazing at her, thinking her a visitant from the other world.

"Wa'a con a' doo for 'oo, mum?" he asked.

Cécile shot a keen glance at the simple and honest old face, and was satisfied.

"You can give me a glass of milk, sir," she said, "and a bit of bread-and-butter. I have come a long way; my driver told me you live here."

"Walk in, mum; walk in. A coald day over the woalds, a'm thinkin'."

Cécile was soon ensconced by the log-fire in the dingy outer apartment of the *cabane*. Presently, an old lady with white hair combed low over her forehead brought in, with many smiles and curtesies, a brown mug of milk, new milk, from the farmer's one cow, with brown bread and a lump of cream cheese on a plate.

"And you two live alone here all the time?" asked Cécile.

"Aye, mum," said the farmer, "us, and the two lads, 'ee knoa."

"Your sons?"

"Aye, mum."

"Good boys?"

"O aye, soa-soa, 'fur as thot goes."

"How old?"

"T' youngest is fifteen; Jock's seventeen by now, a'm thinkin'——"; he appealed with a look to his wife for confirmation. She was still standing curtesying and bowing.

"Well, farmer, I cannot stay long, as my man waits me with the carriage. Your milk and cheese are excellent," said Cécile, quietly laying a sovereign on the mantel, and rising. The farmer, too, rose.

"Thoo's welcome, a'm sure, mum. T' day's bitter cold o'er t' woalds——"

"Still, one must go," said Cécile. "You have here a very solitary life, Mr. Farmer, a pinched life. Good-bye: I hope your boys give you much comfort and satisfaction."

"O, aye," said the farmer, looking sideways on the ground, "they are soa-soa. A' moon't complain. T' elder has gi'en his heart to t' Lord——"

"His what?"

"His heart, 'ee knoa—his heart to t' Lord. But he's a bit lazy loike, and o'er fond o' dallying in bed o' morning. But a' doan't complain."

"He does not rise very early, yes?"

"Noa—t' poor lad. His mother says his lungs ain't that o'er strong."

"And the younger? He, I hope, is a good son?"

"Oh, as far as that goes, a' doan't complain, 'ee knoa. He is a child o' many prayers. In toime, a' hope he'll see the error o' his ways, and turn to t' Lord. Present, he's a bit sullen loike, and bad-tempered at toimes, and fond o' wandering, and cruel to t' cat——"

"Well, good-bye, Farmer. I hope your sons will be all you wish. But where are they now?"

"They? Oh, Jock's behind the wall there in bed with a bit o' coald. Tom, t' yoonger, 's up the beck looking after a few head o' stock, such as they are, 'ee knoa. Can't I come wi' thee a little way?"

"No, pray do not trouble. I know the path. Once again, good-bye."

"And you two live alone here all the time?"

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The farmer held open the door and stood looking after her as she went up the path of the beck till a winding hid her from view. When he turned back into the room he said to his wife, who was looking at the bright sovereign in her palm:

"Thot's a seemly young deam, now, woife? Shoo's fro' foreign parts, I'm thinking. And a bitter day o'er the woalds she'll ha' o' it, too."

"Sic a sweet lady 'a never did see in a' my days!" said Mrs. Wilson with enthusiasm.

Cécile, meanwhile, wound up the path until she came to the steep defile by which she had come down. But instead of climbing up she walked on past it, higher up the gully.

By her side brawled and foamed the black beck among its rocks.

Cécile's eyes went through all the ravine, as far as they could see, with keen outlook, peering behind every rock, searching every thicket.

At last she heard a bleat. And thither she directed her stealthy step.

In a little opening among a clump of holly trees, she spied a little flock, thick-fleeced, and browsing.

A dog ran out to her with a low growl, but she bent down to it, patting and pacifying it. It was appeased, and ran back under the brushwood into the glade, wagging its tail.

When Cécile had crept near, she peered through the growth of bramble, and saw a boy standing with his back towards her. His head was bent down; one arm, stretched somewhat behind him, rested on a rock. From the other hung a large, one-bladed penknife, open.

With utter stealthy slowness, noiseless as a cat, step by step, Cécile approached him. Once, as a twig snapped beneath her feet, Tom half turned his head, but did not see her. His whole attitude was one of listless pensiveness. The boy seemed deep in thought. All at once Cécile was close behind him. With a sudden jerk she had the knife tugged from his fingers, and almost before he could turn to face her, she had said, with rapid breath:

"Tom! the ring, the bracelet, the watch, and the locket!"

It was a perfectly ghastly and pallid face which the boy turned upon her; and a cruel face, too. His fist was raised to strike—a heavy, gnarled fist for one so young. But Cécile's fist, too, was raised—and in it the knife with its bright, sharp blade. The next moment Tom was on his knees, with chattering teeth and staring eyes.

"Tom! the ring, the bracelet, the watch, and the locket!"

He thought he saw before him a spirit—a spirit armed with all knowledge and all power.

He was a very tall boy, with a rather brutal face, and small scowling brow. As he knelt, his head reached almost to Cécile's bosom. But he crouched cowering before the little woman.

"You will give them—*now?*" she said, the knife still imminent over Tom in her hand.

Tom gulped a "Yes."

"You may get up, then."

She followed him out of the glade, back to the path, and still further up the gully. Tom walked on sullenly before, with bent head, and eyes sidling backwards every now and then. Cécile held the knife.

The boy, at a cleft which ran zig-zag on to the face of the rock of the gulley, turned sharply to the right. Cécile followed him.

He stopped when he had reached a spot where another cleft opened at right angles to the first, and faced her.

"Who art thoo?" he said.

"The *two* rings, the bracelet, the watch, *and* the locket," answered Cécile, gazing steadily into his eyes.

The boy flinched before this omniscience, his eyes drooped; he turned and went down the second cleft, Cécile behind him.

He stopped once more at a spot where there was a flat stone leaning half on the rock-side and half on the mould. He stooped to it, lifted it, and nodded his head sullenly in the direction of a small hole which the stone had covered.

"Pick them up," said Cécile.

"There they be," answered Tom. "Pick them up, if thoo wants them."

Cécile held out her gloved palm.

"It is cold," she said. "I cannot wait here all the day long. Put those things into my hand—the *two* rings, the watch, the——"

Tom stooped with sudden alacrity; and then, slowly, one by one, he put the things upon Cécile's palm.

"Now lead the way back," she said.

He went on before, swinging sullenly with his long legs, pulling twigs out of the rock-side in shame-faced braggadocio. The jewellery was in Cécile's pocket; the knife in her hand.

At the bottom of the steep ascent she called: "Stop!"

Tom stood before her, looking on the ground, munching a blade of grass.

Cécile dived into her pocket for her purse, took out five sovereigns, and held them out to him.

Tom, munching his grass, and looking on the ground, smiled, but made no other movement.

Cécile lifted his heavy red paw, put the money into his palm, and closed his fingers over it. Tom's hand fell back to his side, holding the gold.

"To-morrow," said Cécile, "or some time soon, I want you to come to Hillcrest Lodge—remember the name—and ask to see Cécile Delisle—Cécile—Delisle. You must try to come, see. Will you?"

Tom, looking on the ground, smiled.

"I will keep the knife, lest you stab me as I turn my back. *Would* you stab me, Tom? I hear you are very cruel to the cat, and you treated that poor lady's body shockingly, you know. But would you stab *me*, Tom?"

Tom, looking on the ground, smiled.

"Here, take the knife," said Cécile.

He would not take it; she lifted his other hand, and put the knife into it.

"Good-bye, Tom. Do not forget to come. I like you, you know. You can kiss my hand."

She held out her hand, but he would not kiss it. She

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took hold of the back of his head and ducked it, and made him kiss her hand. Then she ran, toiling, up the hill. At the first bend she looked back, and waved her hand to him.

Tom had taken off his broad-brimmed felt hat, and was furiously waving it round his head. Cécile laughed aloud, and three times kissed her hand to him, then turned the corner, and vanished from Tom's sight.

She reached her trap, and drove back over the shivering wolds to the little station, and from thence arrived at Seaborough a little after three.

A few minutes before four she drove up the lawn of Hillcrest Lodge beside Jack Heathcote in the trap. The day had already begun to darken.

* * * * *

It was to be war to the death. The afternoon sun, just setting, saw the four men together, one of them with deadly hate gnawing in his heart, the other with deadly jealousy and immeasurable contempt.

Down through the deeply-shadowed park, at the back of the Lodge, led a path among the mighty old trees, then over a bridge, which crossed a good-sized stream, then on again by a shooting-box of red stone in the forest, then through another dense growth of oaks, elms, and beeches. Here the road forked, and one of the forks, about a mile from the Lodge, led into a very large lawn or open space, shut in by a palisade of huge tree-trunks, and having at one end a broadish sheet of water.

At the extremity opposite to the water was a stone bench, and in the centre a sun-dial.

This was the spot determined upon for the duel, and here at about half-past three arrived Professor Queech, feeling as if he were going to execution; ten minutes later, Danton; and ten minutes after him, Pendragon. Before the stroke of four, Arthur, too, sauntered in, and threw away his cigar.

The question as to a doctor had been settled by a suggestion of Danton.

"He proposes," the Professor had said to Pendragon, "that only one of the pistols be loaded. There will therefore, in that case, be at least one life of the two certain to come safe out of this deplorable affair, sir."

"And how do you propose to arrange the details?" the hussar had asked.

"You, sir, will load one of the pistols, and place the two in a hat held behind your back; I will then take one, and give it to my principal, and you will give the other to yours."

"But suppose," said the Lieutenant, "that the one who has the loaded weapon only wounds, instead of killing the other—we shall still want a doctor?"

"No—it appears not. Dr. Danton says not. I tell you, sir, this is a dreadful business. He says that if the Captain obtains the loaded pistol, there is no chance of a practised shot like the Captain, expert in war, failing to hit a vital spot in so large a man as himself; while if he, Dr. Danton, obtains the loaded weapon, he assures me that there is not even the least chance of a failure of aim. He seems to have acquired a horrible and fiendish coolness and dexterity in the matter of pistols."

"Is that so?"

"It is a dreadful thing, Lieutenant Pendragon. He has fought *many* duels, it seems, and always with the same success. It is appalling, sir, to think of. At all events, here is no need for doctors, but for grave-diggers—unless some higher Power interposes ——"

Even the soldier sighed.

And so, as the sun went down, the four men met in the glade of the forest.

There was little talk. The disposal of the body was already a settled matter. There was a broadish sheet of water at one end of the glade.

"It is very cold," said Arthur to Pendragon, "pray don't keep me bothering about here."

"Are your nerves steady—your hand?" the Lieutenant said in a whiser.

"My dear boy, don't be absurd," drawled Arthur. "I am not a child. Isn't it *confoundedly* cold?"

The ground was hard and white, itself stiff-fixed in the rigour of death.

Pendragon took from the pocket of his overcoat a pair of Colt's pistols. One of them was already loaded.

A general movement ensued from the stone bench towards the middle of the opening.

There was a sinister, yellow gleam in the eyes of Danton—a rigidity of stone in his pasty face. He moved ponderously forward, with his imperial between his thumb and forefinger.

"I choose the pitch, you measure," said Pendragon to the Professor.

He looked about, and stood on a spot where the ground ran level.

Pendragon gave the other to Arthur.

"Here," he said.

The short legs of the Professor went stalking out. One, two, three—fifteen—paces.

Where Pendragon had stood, Arthur took his stand. Danton followed the Professor and stood where he stopped.

Midway, Pendragon and the Professor met for the ceremony of the choice of weapons. Pendragon took off his hat, and deposited the weapons in it. Then he put both hands behind his back, holding the hat in them. The Professor went behind him.

Pendragon waited.

The Professor stood on tiptoe and whispered from behind, close to the Lieutenant's ear:

"Oh, this is a shocking thing, sir! What shall I do?"

"Choose—quickly!" cried Pendragon.

Professor Queech gingerly took up one of the weapons, and holding it from him, bore it to Danton. Pendragon gave the other to Arthur. Then each second stood a little way from his principal, on opposite sides of the straight line between them.

Danton put one arm behind his back, and held out the pistol at full length with the other, pointing at Arthur's breast. Arthur, too, pointed at Danton.

"Deuced nuisance!" said Arthur to himself, "I feel shivery all over—such a *confoundedly* cold day!"

"Are you ready?" sang out Pendragon.

"Yes!"

"All right!"

"Then—one—two—three—*fire!*"

Arthur pulled his trigger. His aim was straight for the heart of Danton. But the pistol merely clicked.

Danton had not fired. He stood, with a bitter smile, covering his antagonist with the pistol, for full half a minute. Then he lowered it, and cried out:

"May I speak with Captain Musgrave for a moment in private?"

"Certainly not," shouted Arthur, "if you have anything to say, there is my second."

"No—I cannot speak to him. I must fire."

"Speak to him, Arthur—for God's sake, man!" said Pendragon, coming near, trembling in every limb.

"What can he have to say to me?" asked Arthur, with lifted eyebrows.

"Never mind—do!—I beg you!—like a dear chap, do now!"

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"It's a deuced nuisance," said Arthur. Then he lifted his voice: "All right—meet me half-way."

Half-way he and Danton met.

"I agree to spare your life," said Danton, "on the condition that you leave Hillcrest Lodge to-night, and give me your word of honour never to see or hold any communication of any kind with the lady who is the cause of our quarrel during the rest of your life. Do you consent?"

"My good sir, you are quite certainly a d—— fool," said Arthur, his face the very expression of scorn. "I need not tell you that such a proposition would never have occurred to a gentleman—not even to a French gentleman."

"You decline then?"

"Yes."

"Then resume your place."

The two men returned to the appointed spots. Arthur stood with his arms by his side. Danton levelled his pistol, covering the heart of his rival.

* * *

Jack Heathcote lifted Cécile out of the trap. She threw him a nod and a smile, and ran into the hall, nearly bouncing into Miss Newton's arms.

"Oh, I beg pardon," said Miss Newton, "have you come from outside? I was looking for that tiresome Professor. He promised——"

"No, I have not seen him," said Cécile; "isn't he in the house?"

"He can't be found anywhere. Isn't it too tiresome?"

Cécile ran in, longing for Edith. In her eagerness, as she turned the angle of the corridor, she collided sharply with the Hon. Lily Grandcourt.

"Oh, pardon!" she cried. "I bump with everybody! Do you know where is Edith?"

"I am afraid it was my fault," said the Hon. Lily. "Where *has* Mr. Pendragon vanished to, do you know?"

"What, he, too?" said Cécile. "That is the second——"

She stopped short. A sudden thought seemed to take her.

"Where now is Captain Musgrave—can you tell?" she asked.

"No—I fancy he is playing truant, too."

"Is Dr. Danton in the house, then?"

"I rather fancy not," said Miss Newton; "I think I heard someone asking for him just now."

"Wait—I must go," cried Cécile.

She ran back out into the hall, down the steps, and out into the snow, which was some inches deep. She bent low down, going quickly over a wide area, examining the ground with her eyes, like a bloodhound sniffing everywhere for the scent of death.

Presently, near the borders of the forest, she cried:

"Yes, this is the way they have gone! Oh, I was silly not to have known it!"

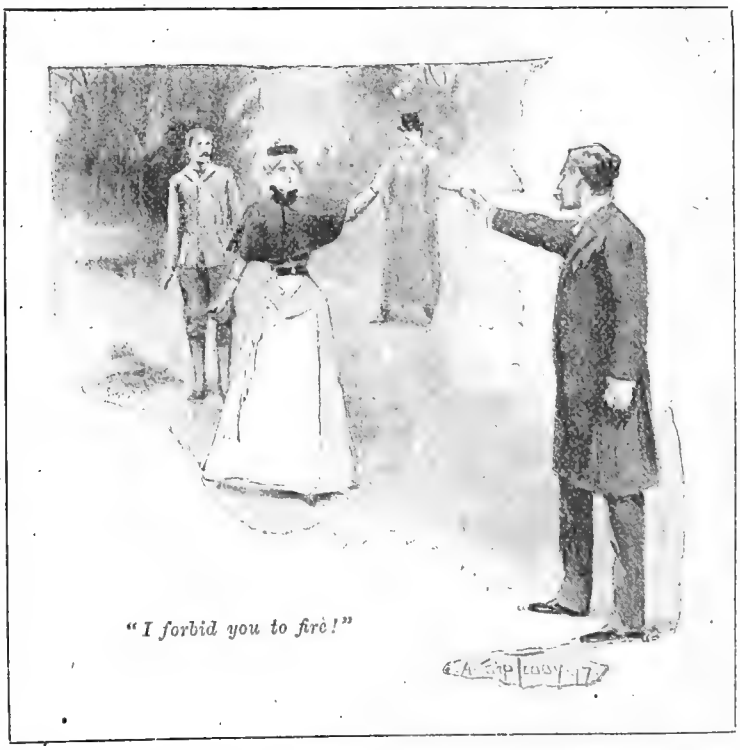
She started running with the lightness of a young roe down the pathway through the park, following the foot-prints in the snow.

* * * * *

Danton levelled his pistol, covering the heart of his rival.

The dusk had deepened, almost to gloom. But he saw his man well, and he was sure of that unerring hand.

He laid his finger to the trigger.



"I forbid you to fire!"

Clear through the still and frosty night rang out, sharp and shrill as a clarion, the sudden and piercing cry:

"I forbid you to fire!"

A figure, with lifted arm, stood between Danton and his prey.

The two seconds ran forward.

Danton's shoulders gave a shrug. His arm dropped.

"Duelling is a crime in this country," cried Cécile. "I refuse to move!"

"Oh, this is a beastly mess!" said Arthur to himself. "I can't stand *this*, I think."

Pendragon had Cécile by the arm.

"You really must, you know," he said. "This is *very* inconvenient. You must go, really——"

"No—don't go—stay here," whispered the Professor.

"All right—let her alone," called out Arthur. "Here—I agree to your conditions. I can't stand this dreadful mess with women."

He left his post and approached Danton.

"You agree?" said Danton.

"Yes."

"On your honour?"

"On my honour."

Arthur put his hands in his pockets, and sauntered away. But his heart was breaking.

(To be continued.)

NOTICE.—In the next number of SHORT STORIES will commence a series of stirring historical tales, entitled "Deeds that Won the Empire." The stories will run through at least a dozen numbers, and among the subjects treated will be the Battle of St. Vincent, the Capture of Quebec, the Storming of Badajoz, etc.

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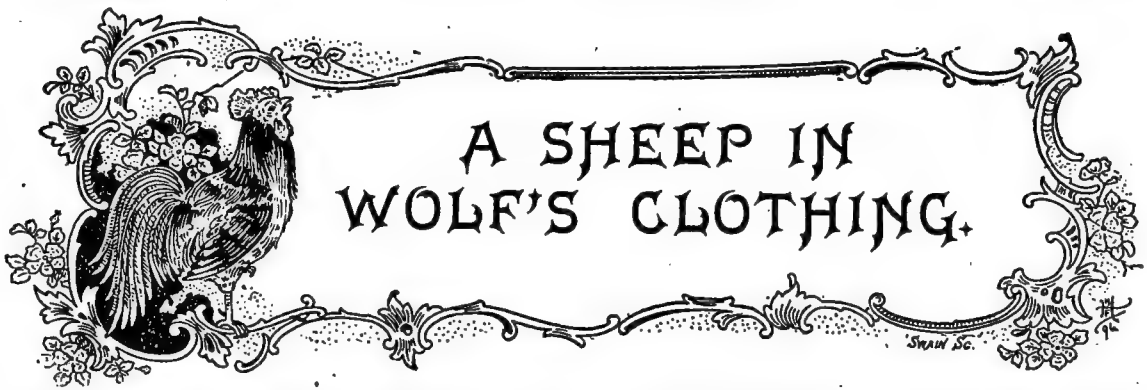

A SHEEP IN WOLF'S CLOTHING.

THE pull is uphill for almost three miles along here, and the horses plod along slowly. The dust is just as deep; but now, instead of blowing off to leeward, as it did a while ago, it hangs close round the stage in a thick, dense, reddish-yellow cloud, almost shutting off the view from the passengers inside, if they cared to look out.

But the beauties of Nature hold their interest only slightly just at present. The dust occupies their attention to a large extent. It fills their mouths, and eyes, and nostrils, and clings to their hair and ears in much profusion. It is disagreeable—very—and the man who has enough spirit left to try and keep up the conversation is voted an ass by his fellow-passengers. They were all very friendly only a short time ago; but they hate each other with a bitter hatred just now—all on account of the dust.

A mile or so back the sun shines brightly on the cañon road, making it look like a long, yellow ribbon; but just ahead the shadow of the mountain on the west, which seems to close the upper end of the pass, cuts the light off in an odd, abrupt way, and presently we shall be in comparative darkness, for the edge of the heavy timber is only a little distance before us.

Somehow the dust doesn't rise very high, or else the driver and the passenger on the box don't mind it, for we can hear them talking. Old Ben, through some unseen but easily imagined influence, has relaxed from his usual taciturnity, and is quite communicative to the beardless, boyish-looking young chap who had got on at Alpena and is sharing the box with him.

As the stage reaches the level and rolls into the shadows of the mountain and the tall pines, Ben points with the whip to the mouth of the narrow pass leading out of the cañon a quarter of a mile away, and remarks:

"See them two big rocks—road runs b'tween 'em? Uh-huh! Wal, right that—mebbe a couple rods 'r so fu'ther on—was whar I was held up one day in th' summer of '76."

"Yes?" said the passenger voice interrogatively. "Would you mind telling me about it?"

Ben chirped to his horses and began:

"Wal, 'twuz this a-way. That mornin' th' 'xpress-box was loaded plumb full o' hard stuff th't hed t' go through that day. Now, jes' 'z luck'd hev' it, one o' the gyards—we had them days—turned up missin' 'bout th' time we was readt t' start fr'm Eldorado in th' mornin'. Berry McNeill, th' other gyard goes arter 'im, an' fin's Mr. Man laid up with a gash in th' head fr'm a beer-bottle—be'n scrappin' night b'fore.

"Th' agent an' me was thinkin' pow'ful 'bout who we c'd git t' take Hauser's place ef he was sick, w'en hyar comes Mac, whistlin'.

"'Say, fellers,' says he. 'Hauser got plunked with a bottle las' night, an' is layin' on his downy couch with a headache. Reckon I c'n go it b' my lonesome. I got Hauser's sawed-off gun.'

"We both kicked a whole lot, but Mac, he'd made up his min', an' was boun' t' hev' his own way. B'sides, we didn't hev' no one right handy t' go 'long, so we hed t' give in, an' Mac, whistlin' one o' his everlastin' toons, piles up on th' box, an' we pulls out. They wa'n't no passengers.

"Wal, we kept our peepers skun right sharp, but ev'rythin' went lovely till jes' long 'bout hyar. Then Mac says: 'Ben, I b'lieve they's some cusses layin' for us up b' them rocks—I think I seen a feller's head, jes' now.' Say I: 'Mac, y're full o' hop. I seen it, too, an' 'twa'n't nothin' but a hawk, crossin' the road.'

"I stirred up the critters a bit, howsomever, but jes'z we turned th' rocks, somebody jumps out fr'm both sides an' nails th' leaders, an' they was so many guns starin' intuh my face th't it made me ashamed o' myself. Mac cut loose wi' th' sawed-off shot-gun, an' then begun wi' th' Winchister, gittin' two fellers an' skinnin' up some more—but they was too darn many of 'em, an' they c'd shoot, too, so Mac he never got no chance t' pump that gun dry. He oughtn't t' hev' shot, nohow, but he allus was a nervy cuss—more nerve'n sense. I use ter say. 'Mac——'"

Half-a-dozen dusky forms leap from the road-side—the big cowboy who got aboard early in the afternoon, and has been dozing and swearing in a sleepy way about the dust, is suddenly wide awake, and we, on the inside, get a good look at the muzzles of his two big revolvers. We hear Ben ejaculate: "Wal, this do beat all!" and then we are invited to get down into the road, where the pleasant-faced, boyish-looking young man who got on at Alpena proceeds to business, and politely, courteously, but firmly withal, relieves us of our spare change—and more, too.

* * * * *

That is my part of the story. Of course, there were quite a number of other people present, including the youthful highwayman and his capable assistants, and they also have a claim on the above narrative. I did not mean that I owned it; what I tried to say was that that is the only one of the events from which come this veracious tale that I took part in, and I think it has been shown that my part was entirely a passive one. Perhaps we had better call that portion of the story the gentlemanly road-agent's, because he got about everything else there was to get. The rest is Hallegan's.

Hallegan and I were travelling together, and it was his foresight—or, rather, an odd notion of his—that enabled us to resume our journey to Denver after the

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road-agent incident. This odd notion was in the form of a thin chamois incole, which he wore in his left boot, and which, in addition to a card giving directions for the disposition of his body in case he should suddenly be called hence while among strangers, contained a fifty-dollar bill. It was an ordinary fifty-dollar bill, but when Terence flashed it before my dazzled eyes in the hotel at Merrill that night I was quite sure that it was larger and more valuable. It took us to Leadville anyway, and that was all we could reasonably desire.

But for the rest of the story:

It was about two years after the road-agent affair, in which we lost almost everything but our good names and the clothing we wore, when one day I was thunderstruck to receive Hallegan's wedding-card. It was the first time I had heard from him for a year, and had anyone else told me Terence Hallegan was a marrying man I should have derided him; but when Terence himself, in his own peculiar chirography, directed to me an envelope containing such startling news, all set forth in the highest style of the engraver's art—well, it was too much, and I went down into the camp, where surcease of sorrow was obtainable in quantities to suit the purchaser, and where there was a full score of Terence's friends and acquaintances to toast his memory and condole with each other. And grief was our lot until the day of Jewett "struck it" in that hole he had been pegging away at over on the other side of the gulch, and excitement reigned supreme.

In the midst of the confusion, telegrams came and went, flying—brought and sent by special courier to and from the office at Sunrise, nine miles away; and one day came one for him who sits here burning the nocturnal oil. It was from Hallegan, who was now living in Chicago, and summoned me to hasten to that city, where I was needed to assist in closing in transactions involving the sale of some mining property in which Terence and I were interested.

Terence met me at the station. He looked remarkably well, even for a person whose health and spirits had always been of the very best, and I told him so, adding that in deponent's opinion he must have drawn a capital prize in the matrimonial lottery.

He smiled happily, and took my arm to walk outside the train enclosure, as he said:

"That I did—that I did, me boy; just wait till you see her, and you'll be sure of it."

He called a cab, gave the driver some brief instructions, and leapt in after me. We rode for several minutes in silence; then Hallegan turned to me in a rather embarrassed way, and said, in a strained tone:

"Billy, me boy—it's very near dinner-time at our house—and there's no time for—explanation. Only—if you think you've seen—my wife—if her face is familiar—please don't mention it, or act as though you noticed it. I'll explain after dinner."

I acquiesced wonderingly, and wondered yet more after I had met Mrs. Hallegan, for I was quite positive that I had never seen her before, and there was ample opportunity during the course of the excellent dinner we presently sat down to, to study her. She was slightly above the medium height, and of a perfect, though rather slight, figure. Her hair and eyes were dark, setting off excellently her clear olive complexion, and her features were all that an artist could desire. She was hardly what one would call a beautiful woman, however. "Handsome" would be the better word—or, perhaps, "striking." There was something about the firm set of her mouth when not speaking, and the rather masculine chin—in which, oddly enough, there was a charmingly feminine dimple—that caused this effect, I think. One would never have taken Mrs. Hallegan for the daughter of the little, white-haired, sweet-faced old lady who sat opposite me, and who she addressed as "mother."

No, I had never seen her up to half-an-hour ago, so I gave up studying her and fell to wondering what Hallegan was going to "explain."

Dinner over, the ladies rose to leave us, smiling over the broad hint Terence had just thrown out concerning a desire to smoke. As they reached the door, Mrs. Hallegan turned and bowed mockingly to her husband, whose hand was just reaching for the bell. "I hope, Sir Terence, that the cigars may prove dry company." Then, with a bright smile, she vanished.

I flopped into my chair breathlessly. Where had I seen that mocking brow? Then suddenly there came before me that little scene in the mountains two years since; the dust, the heat, the sleepy cowboy inside the coach, the dapper little chap who so politely took our money and watches. *He* bowed just that way when he finished his work and departed. "Her brother," I thought—"black sheep, blot on family escutcheon. How much they resemble——"

"Well, me boy?"

Hallegan was looking at me quizzically through the smoke, we having lighted our cigars meanwhile. I suppose I looked embarrassed. Of course, it was all rot; the idea of there being any connection, however remote, between the stately creature who had just left us and the little rascal who engineered that hold-up!

Hallegan spoke:

"Billy, me boy, I won't make a short story any longer than is necessary. You remember the little fellow who held us up two years ago?"

"Of course I do."

"Yes, very likely. Well, I fancy I'd better begin at the beginning.

"Three years ago, a young fellow named Wilson, who had been employed as cashier by the L. and A. Stage Express Company got into trouble over his accounts. The manager—Robinson—charged him with a shortage amounting to several thousand dollars. There was an investigation, and, on the strength of certain circumstantial evidence which need not be stated, as it is immaterial, backed by the testimony of Robinson, the manager, Tweedy, the superintendent, and Frank Robinson, son of the manager—who, by-the-way, had always been Wilson's bosom friend—the cashier was convicted on trial, and sentenced to a long term at Cañon City. Strange to say, he offered no testimony and made no defence, except his plea of 'not guilty.'

"Well, it killed him. Inside of a year the worry and disgrace, along with the hard work and close confinement—he had never been very strong—had wasted him to a shadow, and when, at last, he knew he couldn't live very long, he sent for his mother and sisters to come to him.

"His mother was too ill herself to travel, and one of the sisters—a cripple—was obliged to remain with her, but the elder sister went.

"She found him dying—dying in prison. It was the first she had known of his trouble, and, naturally, she was terribly shocked.

"He told her the true story of the affair, that young Robinson, between whom and himself had existed a sort of Damon and Pythias friendship, was the guilty one; and how, when some of the stockholders got wind of the shortage, the two Robinsons and Tweedy, who

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was a brother-in-law of old Robinson, had conspired to shield the guilty man by sacrificing an innocent one who would not defend himself. The confession made by the dying man was not altogether a voluntary one. His sister, who had known nothing except that he was innocent, caught a hint of the truth from him when he was raving in delirium—the rest she made him tell her.

"After young Wilson's death, his sister went quietly to work to see what could be done to prove her brother's innocence and to place the guilt where it belonged, but soon found that nothing could be proved. The Robinsons were too strong for her.

"About this time Mrs. Wilson and her youngest daughter were obliged to go to South Dakota on account of ill-health, leaving the elder daughter, who was studying medicine, here in Chicago. Not long after this the hold-ups on the different lines of the L. and A. began. For the first few times there was only one road-agent—a little chap, but a nervy one, who got talked about by the papers a good deal—but pretty soon there were others, until a band of about eight or nine had organised, under the little fellow's leadership, and they made life a burden to the L. and A people. It made no difference what precautions the company took, or how many guards it employed, the road-agents were too smart, and the boldest kind of hold-ups were successfully made—and, by Jove! it 'busted' the company's business.

"The L. and A. wasn't a heavy concern, of course, but had always made a good deal of money. The frequent hold-ups on its lines, though, proved a settler. It wasn't long before nobody would ship or travel over any of the L. and A. Company's lines unless actually obliged to, and the company was kept pretty busy settling the losses of its customers. Then came the crash, and somehow people began to suspect that the Robinsons had not run things as they should have been handled, and the stockholders investigated. Old Robinson died in disgrace shortly afterwards. The young man took all he could lay hands on and skipped, but was caught at Santa Fé. He's where he should be—at Cañon City. Tweedy got off on a technicality.

"About seven or eight months after we were held up, a stage full of fellows, including myself, was stopped and relieved one afternoon, about ten miles from Milliken, on the old Mule-shoe Trail. The young fellow was one of the robbers—I knew him in spite of his mask. There were only four of the road-agents on this occasion.

"They pulled out, leaving us orders not to touch our arms (which they had stacked on the ground) for twenty minutes, under the penalty of getting shot. But one of our party was a devil-may-care chap, and no sooner were the bandits gone than he walked right over to the pile of guns and picked his out, remarking that he 'didn't believe there were any road-agents around just then.' And there weren't.

"Well, the result of this fellow's foolhardiness was that we concluded it would be money in our pockets to get on the trail of those four road-agents, so we started after them, separating a little distance from each other. We followed them all the afternoon, but couldn't find a trace.

"You know how the old Mule-shoe Trail is? Well, the driver had gone on, agreeing to meet us on the other side of the Shoe—it is only three or four miles across.

"I was just about making up my mind to join the other fellows, and had stopped to think of the best way to cross the creek, when I heard a queer sound, like a woman sobbing. I looked cautiously around, and there, within two rods of me, was the young road-agent, crying as if his heart would break. There was nobody else there, it was plain to be seen, so I quietly sneaked up and requested him to throw up his hands.

"Did you ever hear a woman scream at the sight of a mouse? That's just the way this young fellow screamed when he saw the muzzle of my gun—and I, as soon as I saw the scared, tearful face turned to mine, knew as well as I know now that the famous bandit known as 'Foxey' was only a woman.

"She seemed to trust me, somehow, and pretty soon I had the whole story from her. Then I sat down and talked to her like a brother; and the result was that next day the road-agents missed their leader, and, inside of a fortnight, Miss Jean Wilson was back here in Chicago at her studies again.

"I need not say that this gentle bandit, who ruined the business of the L. and A. Company, took not one cent. of the proceeds, and never permitted any of the band to interfere with Uncle Sam's mail. The latter fact accounts, in a measure, for their success, for Uncle Sam is a bad man to interfere with. The former fact, I think, had to do, to some extent, with the strong hold which 'Foxey' had over his subordinates, although they must have had a good deal of faith in his demonstrated ability as an executive. The band was broken up not long after 'Foxey's' disappearance, and three of the men were caught; but they didn't know any more concerning their mysterious ex-chief than did the public at large."

"And—and Miss Wilson is——"

Hallegan's eyes twinkled: "Is waiting for us. Let us join her," he said.

R. L. Ketchum.

RESULT OF JUMBLE STORY.

No. 29.

The first prize of £5 goes to A. S. Holland, Worcester College, Oxford.

The following receive £1 each: Mrs. Leithead, 11, Lower Bridge Street, Chester; T. M. Hughes, 60, George Street, Altrincham, Cheshire; W. Pontin, Stubbington, near Fareham, Hants.

£2 has gone to Mrs. G. F. Healey, 3, Montrose Terrace, Ranelagh, co. Dublin.

THE KEY.

Title: "FAR ABOVE THE STAIRS."

76	9	112	101	15	5	114	30	61
7	1	111	83	25	120	125	29	106
70	12	50	126	18	43	103	41	31
86	2	104	68	60	17	36	46	54
23	107	89	108	71	57	121	92	98
33	84	62	132	51	42	44	53	95
6	3	59	117	38	20	58	49	96
19	10	77	81	100	56	85	45	94
11	52	24	130	87	40	127	90	91
97	28	16	116	14	69	55	63	27
37	13	115	39	64	35	119	79	93
82	102	109	26	80	22	131	65	4
99	113	72	32	105	74	124	88	
34	123	73	48	118	75	66	128	
8	129	122	78	21	110	67	47	

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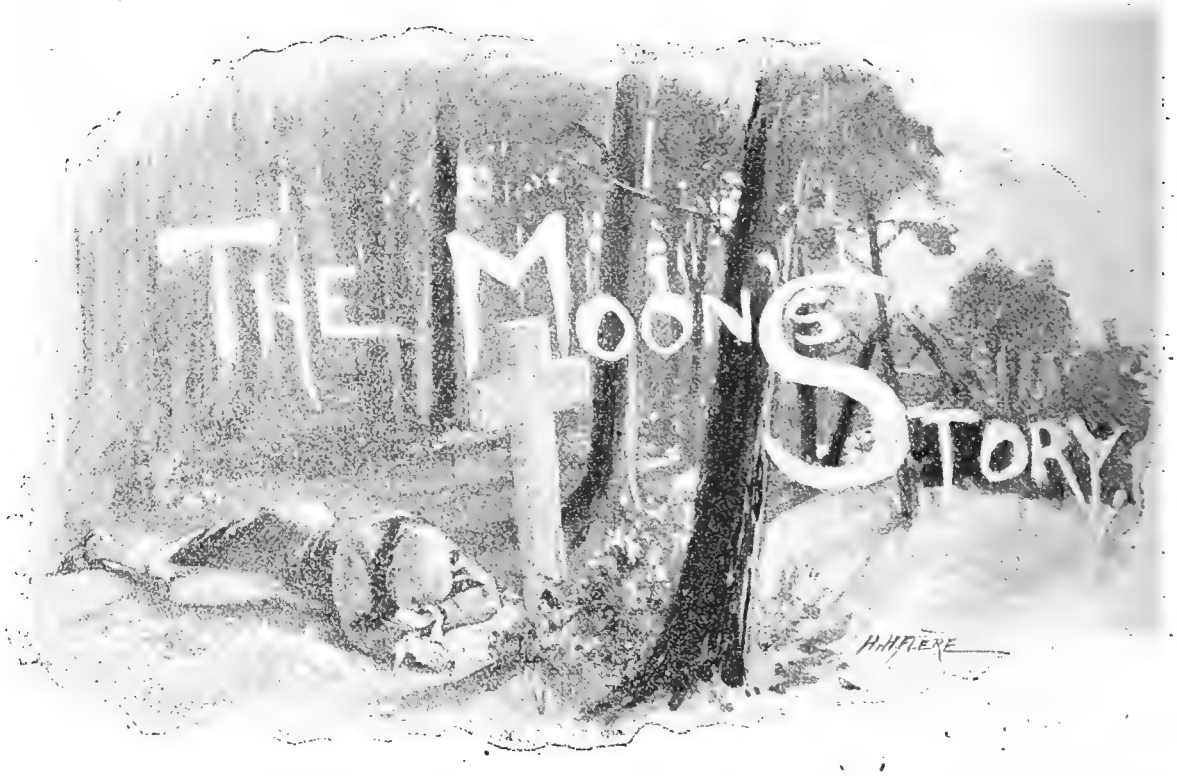

"Never morning wore to evening but some heart did break."

Yes, I am very, very old—so old that at times I almost lose count of my own years.

Many centuries I have thrown a pale light over your world, for I am marvellously fond of it—of its beautiful fields and forests, of its quiet hills and mountains, of its lakes, rivers, and valleys; I love them one and all, and they look, oh, so fair when wrapped in my pure embrace, that seems to sweep off all the glamour and heat of the merciless day. Is it not so, ye human spirits? Does not an infinite peace fall upon you when you stand in the night, and lift your tired faces to my softening rays?

Ah, if you did but know the secrets that I could unfold, the tales I could tell, of sad partings and bitter tears, of sweet vows, now, alas, forgotten and dead! But fear not; it is the dearest part of my lonely old life to see lovers wander trustfully out under my light, and whisper the old story that, though I have heard from times immemorial, never falls with less sweetness on my listening ear. Yes, the old man in the moon has ears, though you do not know it—large, sharp ears, that hear every foolish whisper that you guard so secretly. But he is a kindly old fellow, and very rarely betrays confidence until your eyes are closed in everlasting sleep and no word of his can harm the cold stillness of your hearts.

We all have favourites, I suppose; so I shall not be blamed if I plead guilty, and own that some forms linger longer in my memory than others.

It is a woman I am thinking of now, a beautiful girl such as we all used to know and love long ago, a tall, lissom creature, with the passion of the South in her eyes, and the beauty of heaven in her face. She wore soft, clinging gowns of white, that fell in straight folds to her feet, with high satin puffs on the shoulders. Her night-shaded hair lay in waves over her ears something as they wear it to-day but with a difference. She was nothing like the end-of-the-century girl, "the new woman," so to speak, who cares so little for moonlight, sentiment and love; her every movement was replete with that exquisite clinging womanliness that seemed then as much a part of the woman as the air she breathed. She would come on the porch of her homestead, and in the still of the night wander through the grounds; never alone.

As I have said she was supremely beautiful, with the beauty of those days; and so she had lovers by the score.

I have often wondered what subtle charm it was that brought all men to her feet, a magnetism that none could resist, but it was there, and, strange as it may seem, I have never known her face to flush with an answering thrill. She seemed to be wearing her life out dreaming and waiting for a love that should answer the craving of her soul—a love I feared she would not find in your world of unsatisfied desires. Her own heart was lying dormant, waiting for the touch of a magic hand, and at last it came, as it must to us all some day.

How well I remember the night! It was an early summer. I had risen slowly to my full height, and the garden lay beneath wrapped in a dead whiteness that seemed to make even the sleepy flowers lift their heads, thinking that dawn had crept upon them unawares.

She came at last, stepping out into the fuller light with her old regal carriage. By her side was the dark figure of a man, his head hidden in the shadow, but his face uplifted, and in her eyes I read the look I had

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been watching for so long—deep and heavy, but warmed with a glow that seemed to transfigure her features. It was the birth of love, and he had found a glorious cradle in her heart.

They moved slowly onward, and I saw him bend and whisper to her in very soft, low tones. She smiled, and reluctantly took the white jasmine that had been lying in her hair and held it towards him.

"Do you not like the odour?" she questioned wonderingly. "I think it is the sweetest of all flowers," she continued, and with a quick gesture she raised the blossom to his face.

There was a dead silence for a moment, then a heavy frown swept over his brow, and with a fierce gesture he tore the flower from her hand and, throwing it upon the ground, placed his foot heavily upon its delicate white petals. The crushed perfume was wafted to me, and seemed to dull my senses. Only dimly did I hear her faint cry of astonished wonder, and his quick apologies, for as I looked down at the dark face of the man, the scent of that jasmine was recalling a scene in a far-off country. I saw a lonely grave under tall pine trees, and, shaded by their branches, a man's form in mad anguish across the turf—in his clenched hands a wreath of white flowers. I can smell the faint, deathly perfume even now, and hear his sobs, rendered heavy by the stillness of the night. Then, as suddenly as the picture came it faded, and I was again looking at the garden, at the stern face of the man of this hour, and it was not strange; they were one and the same!

Ah, the pity of it. I would have cried aloud to warn her; but, as is my wont, according to Nature, remained silent, and she passed on in innocent happiness.

Well, the days crept on all too swiftly for her. Each evening seemed happier than the preceding one; every power that she possessed was strained to the utmost to win the lightest regard; and, strange to say, one as sensitive as she to impressions failed to notice that his heart did not speak through the words of love breathed so carelessly in her ear.

A little contents a woman when she is blinded by her own all-absorbing affection; and so Daphne was happy! And when, one evening, I saw him clasp her in his arms and ask her to be his wife, I knew that, come what might hereafter, that moment of incomparable ecstasy would outweigh all future sorrow. Almost in shame, I saw her wrap her white arms round his throat, and lift a face stamped with a great love that neither time nor change could efface.

Perhaps her heaven was then; who can tell? I only know that it did not last. There were a few happy weeks, and then the old restless look, that I had seen before, settled down on his face, and I knew that her frail hold upon him had snapped and her misery had begun.

Poor child! hardly a month had passed since their betrothal, when he murmured vague excuses, pleaded business, etc., and was off to his home, promising to return ere one moon had come and gone.

Ah, the frailty of man's vows!

She waited patiently, as the long days passed and grew into weeks and months, her faith in him never failing—the pure, strong faith of a dumb brute that is seldom rewarded.

He came not!

Each night I would watch her wander into the garden, always alone now; her face paler and very thin, in her eyes a strange, questioning look of fear—a fear she would not acknowledge even to herself.

The summer was well-nigh gone, when one evening, near the end of August, she came as usual to the garden. I was startled at the terrible change in her face; heavy shadows lay under her eyes, and the pallor of her skin was intensified by the black hair which had been caught up in a careless knot at the back of her head, held only by a slender gold dagger; hanging thus loosely round her brow, it seemed to make more pronounced the sadness lurking there.

She wandered down to the little lake which lies at the end of the garden, and stood, her hands clasped listlessly before her, gazing at the dark, still water. Hours may have passed, minutes or seconds—I took no heed of time—when there was a quick step on the grass, and a man's form emerged into the fuller light. The sound seemed to arouse the still figure; slowly Daphne raised her head and looked into his face. She did not move, but over her brow came a great wave of joy.

She held out her arms mutely; then with a gasping cry rushed forward and flung herself upon his breast. Her whole soul seemed to pass into that one embrace; she lay sobbing and whispering his name again and again, in painful ecstasy; her white hands caressing his throat and hair with touch tender as a mother's. But the man was silent, and the moments

Gazing at the dark, still water.

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He stood leaning against the bench.

passed. Then I saw him lift her arms from about his neck and put her from him, gently, but with stern determination.

"What is it?" she whispered, her fingers still clinging to his, her eyes questioning his face: "Paul, tell me!"

"Tell you," he said roughly, and even in the dim light I could see the great whiteness of his brow, "aye, that is it. There is only one thing left to tell you now—that I am a cowardly scoundrel, and that I have come to ask you to give me back my promise, to set me free." He spoke quickly and brutally, as if he feared his own strength.

"To set you free," she repeated, in a low, moaning tone. "I do not understand." Her hands dropped, but her eyes still dwelt on his face.

He shifted awkwardly, but could not speak.

"What is it that you mean?" she reiterated.

"For Heaven's sake, Daphne, do not make me say it again," he burst forth impulsively. "Is not once enough?"

Then she seemed to awaken to his full meaning.

"It is enough," she said passionately; "but Paul, Paul, I cannot believe you; my ears have deceived me." She took his face between both her hands and forced him to meet her gaze. "Tell me again," she whispered feverishly, "with your eyes looking into mine. No, you need not be afraid, I am not angry, only unbelieving. Oh, my love, it is not true."

He was silent; her eyes burnt into his. "Speak," she repeated pleadingly, "is it true?"

He tore his face from her hands and turned away. "I cannot," he muttered despairingly; "you will never forgive me."

"Forgive you," she said, stepping towards him, her face aflame with sudden anger, "it is true, then—true that my lover of a few short months is weary of his pretty plaything so soon, is ready to cast it away because it pleases him no longer. Great Heavens! what have I done to endure so terrible a humiliation? What awful fate forces me to love a man so base?"

"You cannot say anything that will be too hard for me to bear," he said sullenly; "I have condemned myself enough."

"Enough! Could it ever be enough?" she cried in fierce passion. "What condemnation would be too hard for you—you, who came here, and, day by day and hour by hour, won my love with your false words, only to cast it aside when the novelty wore off, as if it were a worth'ess thing? Did you never think, in your careless pleasure, of the heart you were breaking, and the life you would wreck?"

He turned to her pleadingly. "I can only ask you to forgive me."

"Never mention that word to me again," she cried fiercely. "Forgive you! I do not wonder that you shrink before me; it seems one look from my eyes would be enough to lay you dead."

"If I could have died, I would have done so long ago," he said sadly. "Could you know what it was to have the being you loved best on earth cold and still in your arms, you would not speak of death."

"I could have looked with peace upon your dead face," she answered calmly, "rather than have known you as you are—to have had my idol shattered."

"Did you make an idol of me, Daphne? Ah, child, I know how far I am from that, and when I think of the pain I have caused you through my brutal selfishness, I feel that the grave indeed would be too good a place for me."

"Why did you do it?" she cried despairingly. "Why did you do it? I loved you so!"

"Aye that is it," he answered gloomily. "Love, that one passion, is the root of half the woe in the world; it drives us mad, it tears away our peace of mind, it shows us the fulness of happiness only to intensify the misery that is sure to come; it——"

She interrupted him with a quick, anguished gesture.

"Do not speak against it," she said slowly. "It has brought me misery, I own, but it has also taught me what life was. I cannot hear you malign the only pure sentiment left on earth."

Her voice sank in a sob; he looked at her intently for a moment, then, taking one of her hands in his, "Daphne," he said, "I have done you the greatest wrong man can do a woman, and there is no excuse for me; but I want you to listen to my story—to let me tell you why I hate the name of love."

"Some other time," she murmured faintly. "I am tired now."

He took her hand quietly, and led her to a rustic seat,

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stubborn determination in his face; she knew those lines well, poor child, and did not make further protest; her hands only clasped each other convulsively, and she whispered: "Tell me quickly."

He stood leaning against the bench, gazing out into the darkness a few moments; when he spoke, his voice sounded harsh and unnatural.

"It is not a pretty story," he said, "nor is it one that is easy for me to tell, feeling as I do the ignoble part I have played towards you. It only shows me in darker colours, and will serve to thoroughly disenchant you—at least, I pray so. I have been a weak, pitiful coward all along, Daphne, and, as you said, should be ashamed to stand here before the greatness of your faith and purity."

He paused. "Go on," she said feverishly, "tell me everything."

"It is the old, old story of a man's mad love for a woman," he continued. "In my case she was not particularly good or beautiful; but I loved her. Heavens! talk of worship, of wild, slavish idolatry! I felt it then. She held my heart in her small fingers, but she treated it gently; she, too, loved me. Well, I will not make it long; for one short year we lived in paradise on earth. The world seemed too small to hold our happiness; we were drunk, mad, with the sweetness of our life. It could not last. I have often thought of those mournful words from Annabel Lee, how true they are! 'The angels, not half so happy in heaven, were envying her and me.'"

He sighed heavily, and Daphne with mute agony covered her face with her hands; but he did not heed her, he was lost in selfish pain of his own.

"Yes, they envied us," he went on, "envied poor human mortals even a taste of heavenly bliss; for Death came down one evening and laid his cold hand upon her brow and chilled her in my very arms.

"She was stricken with a terrible fever, and in twenty-four hours lay dead on my breast. Good Heavens! if I could have died, that moment would have killed me. But no, I lived on, to lay her still form in the grave, to call eternally upon her name, and hear only the mad echo of my own voice; to pray wildly for the mercy of death, and have it denied me. I was punished in that moment for all my sins, past and future." He paused a moment and let his eyes rest on the crushed, pitiful figure at his side.

"You once wondered why I bore such an aversion to flowers," he continued. "She worshipped them, and on her grave were great wreaths of white jasmine. Their odour even now drives me mad." He shivered and drew his hands across his eyes. The dark water rippling at their feet was the only sound to disturb the absolute silence, and his voice died away. He went nearer and took one of her hands in his.

"Daphne," he said gently, "my life is buried in that grave. For seven long years I wandered like one possessed from clime to clime, trying to find peace and rest, but in vain; then I met you, and as I looked at your beautiful face I felt that I might again know happiness, and that, in a new love, I could forget the past."

"Do not go on," she interrupted piteously; "I know the rest."

"You know the most of it," he said firmly, "but not all. I strove to be true to you, but when I held you in my arms, her face seemed ever to come between us; when I whispered words of love her voice seemed to be crying out in reproach. I could not rest or sleep, for at night her mournful eyes were gazing at me in the darkness like two lost souls; I was haunted, possessed; then I thought if I could go again to her grave and see the spot where all that remained of her loved body lay, this terrible phantom would leave me. You know how restless and dissatisfied I was then, how I pleaded groundless excuses and hurried away. But it was all of no use." His face paled, and he moved further away. "I can hear her voice now," he whispered distractedly, "calling, calling, always ringing in my ears. I can see her face. See!" he grasped Daphne's arm roughly, and drew her nearer to the lake, "see two great eyes, her eyes, looking at me, looking in reproach? Oh, Heavens, it will drive me mad!"

He covered his face with his hands in shivering terror.

He grasped Daphne's arm roughly.

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The woman's voice broke the oppressive stillness.

"We are quite alone," she said calmly, "your senses are deceiving you, I see nothing. This scene has lasted long enough, we are both overwrought," she pressed her hands hard against her breast. "You must go now," she continued, still calmly; "but first, I give you your full freedom. God knows I would not hold you to your promise a moment after this."

He caught her hands. "Can you forgive me?" he whispered brokenly, "can you forgive me, Daphne, for spoiling your life?"

For a moment her eyes dwelt on his with the light of her great love shining through them.

"Yes," she answered gently, "I can forgive, and I will not utter one reproach. I think God has laid a heavy enough punishment upon you already for your infidelity. We will never meet again; take this and go." She drew from her trembling finger her diamond betrothal ring, and held it towards him in the dim light.

"I cannot take it," he muttered, shuddering.

She drew her head up haughtily. "I certainly will not keep it," she said, and she laid the glittering trinket in his hand.

"Then let it go where it belongs," he said roughly, and with a sudden passion flung the gem into the water, where it fell with a splash and vanished from sight, leaving only a tiny eddying circle to speak of its resting place. For a second Daphne gazed at the spot with wide anguished eyes; then a moaning cry of agony rang out on the evening air as she flung herself heavily upon her lover's breast, wrapping her bare arms passionately round his throat in eternal farewell.

Merciful Providence! that such misery should endure for the innocent! I listened painfully to her faint voice whispering his name over and over; I saw her trembling hands push back the dark hair from his brow and gaze long into his face, her lips quivering with anguish, and —I cursed mankind.

He, too, was touched, for he held her tenderly, and repeated again: "Forgive me."

And again she answered: "Yes, freely and fully."

He raised her bent head and pressed a last cold kiss on her brow. "Good-bye," he said brokenly. "Good-bye," she repeated after him mechanically; but she did not move from his embrace, and it seemed hours that she lay there in still silence. I began to have a terrible fear of I know not what, when she at last raised her head and tore her arms from round his neck.

"Go, now," she said, in a husky voice, "go quickly."

He lingered.

"Go," she commanded again, passionately this time, "and I will pray God to bring you peace and rest." She pressed her hands against her eyes heavily; and when she at last dropped them, the sound of his footsteps had died away, and she was alone.

Her hands went instinctively to her side, as a spasm of pain contracted her face, and her lips grew quite blue. She stood thus in silence for some moments, when a twig breaking somewhere aroused her. She suddenly stretched her arms out wildly to the unresponsive air. "Paul! Paul! Paul!" The very stars seemed to shudder, as with a gasping cry, her heart broke, and she fell heavily forward on the damp grass—her head hitting against one of the huge stones that fenced in the lake, her long hair dripping into the slumbering waters.

Crushed and broken like a delicate flower by the ruthless hand of man, she lay there; and in infinite pity I guarded her until the first messenger of dawn came and drove me away.

The next night I rose and looked down upon the garden. All was still as death; no dainty figure moved in and out among the trees, and a dire foreboding came over me; impatiently I shone over the great, still house; all was dark within. No sound of life came to allay my fears. At last I found a crevice in one of the lower casement windows, and crept in. The room was dark and heavy with the scent of flowers. At first I could see nothing, but soon my light fell upon a bier draped all in snowy white. Upon it lay a form composed for Death—a beautiful, motionless figure, covered with perfumed blossoms. It was Daphne.

Her tired hands were crossed upon her breast, her sad eyes closed for ever. Never more would they look in joy or sorrow on the world wherein she had learnt her lesson of misery; even the wreath of jasmine, twined by loving fingers in her hair, could not mar the peace of her eternal sleep; and in my infinite pity I let one small ray of the light she had loved fall across her lips like a kiss.

All was still, the ghostly silence of a death chamber, when suddenly the door was opened, and a man's form groped through the darkness of the room. I caught one glimpse of a face drawn with terrible remorse, before he flung himself down beside the quiet form and bent his head. I almost felt her form tremble beneath his touch, but the heavenly calm of her face changed not. She was at rest; but upon his darkened brow I seemed to see branded the shadow of two graves—one newly-made, and soon forgotten.

A man's heavy sobs broke the stillness. I hid my face behind a cloud and saw no more.

Leigh Ford.

Jumbled Picture Competition.

No. 1.

Cut out the figures portrayed in the sketches contained in this number and paste them up to form one picture. £2 2s. will go to the reader whose attempt is considered the cleverest, and a bottle of *HOME NOTES BOUQUET* to each of the five next. Date of closing: Monday, March 1st, 1897.

How to Make an Income of £5 a Minute.

The income of the Duke of Westminster is over five shillings a minute, day and night, all the year round.

This may be something of an eye-opener to many people, but there is really nothing very extraordinary in it.

We are prepared to pay £5 *a minute* to the four persons who collect the greatest number of coupons from *Short Stories*, *P.W.*, and *Home Notes*, during 1897.

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Full particulars have already been published, and will appear again shortly.

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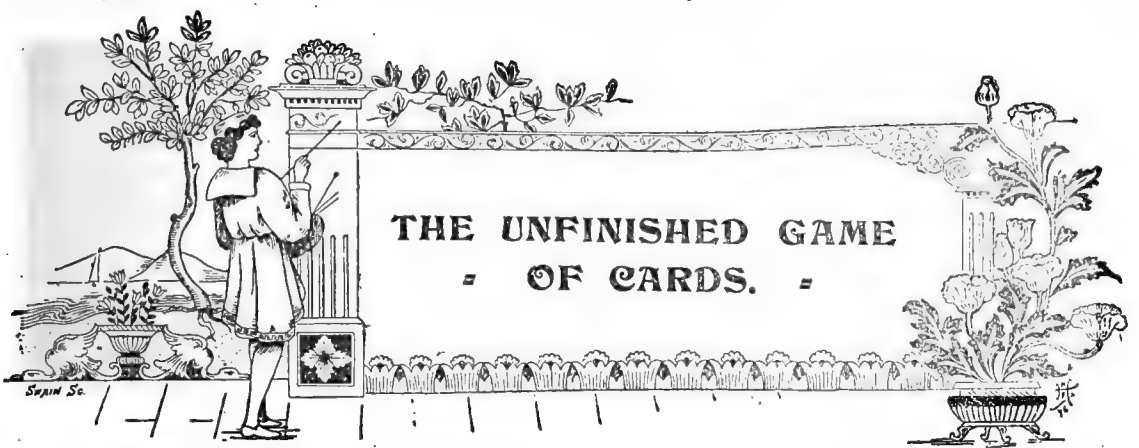

THE UNFINISHED GAME OF CARDS.

The old château, dark against an after-sunset sky, and veiled by tall reeds, which, from my low point of view, seemed high as itself, loomed up before me. It was big and square, this château, with towers, and toppling chimneys, and many windows. About it stood a guard of ancient trees, some in full leaf, others half-dead, and others again, quite dead, but still on duty; in one was a ragged eagle's nest, with the old birds hanging over.

What silence! What loneliness! An old house, deserted and fallen to decay; a strip of marsh, intensely green in the pale yellow light; a wan and weary moon, gazing at the world through a purple mist. A water-bird started noisily from among the reeds and flew shrieking over my head out of sight; a moment later I heard its wings dip in the still water half a mile away.

I wedged the sharp prow of my skiff into a thick growth of reeds, and sprang ashore. The black mud oozed up around my ankles. I began to revile my curiosity.

The Angelus came faintly from the little village across the water; an unseen creature—a frog, possibly, or an insect of some kind—set up a mournful droning; then an owl chimed in with its melancholy note. Oh, the country sounds at twilight, how they sadden one!

After quitting the marsh I found myself in a wild tangle of vegetation. At my feet lay the trunks of fallen trees and pieces of broken marble in the tall grass—this was the pleasure-garden of the old château. Yes—can you believe it?—a pleasure garden, with trim walks and terraces, where tender-eyed beauties strolled in shady alleys and lovers made verses by the side of splashing fountains—the scene of fête, and frolic, and love-making under the eighteenth century's amorous moon.

On close inspection the old building looked even darker and more forbidding. I climbed the broken steps. A bat flapped its wings in my face angrily, as if resentful of my intrusion. I paused and listened. The Angelus had ceased—all was silent.

To enter by the great door was impossible—it was fast locked. Just over my head was a window with a stone balcony. To gain the balcony by means of tangled vines and break through the window seemed an easy matter, and in fact was soon done.

How shall I describe the room in which I found myself?

A great salon, cold and dark and damp as a vault; the faint light sifting through the broken jalousies serving only to emphasise.

I took a step forward and a cobweb caught me across the chin. Something scurried along the floor, my heart rose in my throat, though I knew the creature to be a rat. I stretched out my hands in the darkness and grasped mouldy rags. Pshaw! If one were a coward one would turn and run.

When my eyes became accustomed to the gloom, I saw that the room had been almost royal in splendour. Fragments of decayed damask hung from tarnished cornices; full-lipped, round-limbed goddesses, with faded wreaths in their dingy hair, and green mould upon their bare breasts, smiled down from frescoed walls, smiled upon the rats and spiders, and—and—one knows not what else!—as sweetly as upon the beauties and cavaliers of Louis's court one hundred years ago. The furniture was mostly of the time of the Grand Monarch. There were chairs and sofas, mirrors, and tables; but, alas! their gilding and glory had departed. Rats nested in the upholstery, spiders slung to the walls, a pall of mould, dust, and cobwebs lay over all. A harp stood in a corner, I touched its strings, and they gave out a sound like the groan of a soul in torment. Upon a table of rare workmanship lay cards and coins of silver, from the position of which I guessed that a quartet had been interrupted at whist; upon a second table stood glasses and a decanter of dark-red wine.

A slight noise attracted my strained ear. Forced by that instinct which forbids us to turn our backs to the unexplained, I wheeled about, and beheld a small feathered thing, a tiny owl, sitting on the window-sill, staring at me with inquisitive eyes of pale green fire.

We scrutinised each other for a moment in silence; then the wind began to shake the hangings, and the owl raised its wings and flew away. There was but one door in the room; this probably led to the entrance hall. I stepped forward boldly to open it, and started back again in sudden alarm; my heart stood still, there was a nervous, creeping sensation at the roots of my hair. The door swung open with a creaking of rusty hinges, and revealed to me the shape of something in human guise, standing out from the blackness beyond.

Holy Virgin! Ah, how I deplored my alienation from the saints. To call upon them now would be impertinent—also, quite useless!

The something approached, and proved to be a young girl—a young girl—and I had been afraid! She was elegantly dressed, tricked out in all the coquettish splendour of the court of Marie Antoinette, in rose-coloured brocade, white lace, fine as a spider's web, high-heeled slippers, jewels, paint and powder. For the rest she

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was beautiful—dark-eyed and red-lipped—but with a look so hopeless, so wistfully sad, that my heart went out to her in very pity.

"Madame," I murmured, bowing low.

She turned her burning eyes upon me, and paled beneath her rouge.

"Eugène!"

"Madame, pardon; I am Jean François Louis de Blanchard, officer in the Guard, at Paris. I am——"

"Enough, monsieur, 'tis I who must beg pardon. I mistook you for the blackest villain who ever drove bargain with the devil, forgetting that the chains which bind him are never loosed, even for one night."

"Heydey! And what is all this?"

My fair damsel stood back, and made way for an ancient dame, upon whose palsied head sat a velvet cap, with nodding plumes, and an ancient gentleman, in velvet and lace, with decorations upon his breast.

"Grandmamma, grandpapa, this is M. Jean François de Blanchard. Monsieur, Mme. la Comtesse and M. le Comte de Saint-Germain."

The old couple, thinking of that fine breeding which conceals emotion, were surprised, but received me with great courtesy.

"Ah, monsieur," said the Countess, "it is with much pleasure that I give you welcome. It has been many years since I have entertained guests in this house."

"Welcome to Château Saint-Germain," said the Count.

"And now, Valerie, ring for candles."

"You forget, grandmamma."

"Ah, true, true. I am old, monsieur, and the sight of a young and happy face has made me forget that things are not what they used to be. You must get the candles yourself, my child. They are in the inlaid cabinet under the oval mirror. On second thoughts, get only one, for M. le Diable alone knows where we shall get more when these are gone. Monsieur, may I ask if you are related to the Chevalier de Blanchard, a man of genius and a wit in the old days at Versailles?"

"Possibly. There are many of my name."

"*Ouais!* What a fool I am! The chevalier must, of necessity, have been dead these many years; and without doubt he was confessed and absolved. Alas, alas! I shall never see my old friend again—never again. But time passes—Valerie, the candle."

"Permit me," said I, producing my match-box—a silver bauble, the gift of *la belle Heloise*—and striking a light. The ladies turned pale.

"Monsieur!" cried the Count, in a voice that trembled. "Are you the devil in disguise, dogging our footsteps?"

"Heaven forbid!" and I made the sign of the cross.

"A thousand pardons. Do you play whist, monsieur?"

"Monsieur, I do."

"*Bien.* A dummy is unsatisfactory. Come, madame; come, Valerie. We are losing time. We were three points on the new game, I think, Valerie? Monsieur, will you kindly take the chair opposite madame?"

The Count took the cards and we began. *Dieu*, what cards! And what silver! The former were black with age, and the latter incrusted with green canker and old coinage, none of it of more recent date than 1780.

Truly, my situation was a strange one. Here sat I, Blanchard, of the Guard, playing whist with whom? With what? At least my entertainers were noble. The old couple seemed to take pleasure in the game; madame's small eyes glittered as she raked in her winnings; monsieur, when fortune favoured him, chuckled and showed a mouth full of fangs. Sometimes they disputed a point with warmth, but through it all she was still the *grande dame*, and he the gallant courtier. Once during the evening he took from his waistcoat pocket a gold snuff-box, with portrait of Lambelle; he gazed on the face with reverence, and then offered me snuff.

In the intervals of shuffling and dealing, they questioned me eagerly though guardedly about the doings of the world.

"Is there much gaiety at Versailles?"

"Alas, no, madame."

"At Paris?"

"Ah, yes, Paris is always gay."

"Oh, Paris, my beautiful city. The best years of my life were spent in Paris, monsieur."

When the conversation turned upon the military affairs of the day, I observed that the face of the Count betrayed a lively emotion—tears rose to his eyes. "I, too, have been a soldier," he muttered.

All this time Valerie said not a word, but sat, quietly enough, at my right hand, with her great, gloomy eyes fixed upon something which I could not see. Could it be that she still thought of Eugène?

The one candle flared and flickered, and lit up the faces of the players with an uncanny light, and cast monstrous shadows upon walls and ceiling; the wind moaned about the house and shook the ragged hangings. Behind my back I heard a rat gnawing at the harp-strings. I played badly—very badly. The politeness of madame was put to the test, and—to her honour, let me say—it stood the strain. But, tell me, could you play whist with a mind divided between the vague shadows that lurked under sofas and chairs and in dark corners and—a beautiful woman?

The Count was dealing and the Countess yawning behind her painted fan. I resolved to rouse the young girl from her reverie, and, leaning towards her, whispered:

"You are preoccupied, mademoiselle."

"Monsieur!"

"Trust me."

"Ah, my friend, you know not what you ask."

"Mademoiselle, you are thinking of that villain Eugène—is it not so?"

"Hush, in the name of Heaven. You cannot understand, monsieur. I loved him—oh, how dearly I loved him! I was reckless, I was mad. I would have given life and salvation for his sake, and—*mon Dieu!*"

"Monsieur, the deal is yours," said the Count.

The next deal was Valerie's; the next the Countess's. I seized the opportunity to resume the interrupted conversation.

"You do not love him now?"

"Love him? Ah, love is a tender flower; when trodden upon it dies, but in its place spring poisonous weeds which never die. Hatred and revenge—these are the weeds that overrun my heart, monsieur."

"Revenge?" I laid my hand upon my sword. "But tell me where this villain is to be found, and, by all the saints in the calendar, you shall be revenged!"

About the lady's lips there played a smile which disconcerted me; she touched my hand with her own, which was cold, cold as a grave-stone.

"Friend, put up thy sword. If the saints would only hear me I would pray through all eternity that thou and he might never meet; but, *ma foi!* the good saints have forgotten my very name. As to vengeance, we will leave that to the devil, monsieur."

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"Valerie, monsieur, *attendez!* Are you aware, monsieur, that you have trumped my ace?"

And so the night wore away. We shuffled, dealt and played, lost and won; madame scolded me, and I made elaborate apologies to madame; between whiles I talked with Valerie behind her fan.

"Mademoiselle," I said, "I would die for you. Is there anything in the wide world that I can do to serve you?"

"Yes; give me the rose that you wear."

It was an insignificant flower pinned on my breast by a village girl, but she seized it eagerly, laid it against her cheek and pressed her lips to its drooping petals. I interpreted the action in my own way, and my heart leapt within.

Was it love that I felt for this strange creature with the painted face and powdered hair? Was it her beauty, or her unknown wrongs, or the mystery that surrounded her that attracted me so powerfully? Upon my soul, I neither knew nor cared! I feasted my eyes upon her face and form. She filled my heart and mind—all else was crowded out, even Heloise.

It was very late, the wind wailed like a banshee, the Count nodded in his chair, with mouth open and eyes turned backward—*parbleu*, he did not look handsome! The Countess sat and gloated over her winnings with an expression on her yellow old face that curdled my blood.

"Shall we not finish the game, madame?" I asked. But she did not reply.

Valerie rose from her chair with rustling of her silken gown and crossed to where the harp stood. I followed. She swept her hand across the strings and began a little chanson, something about love and idleness and a shepherdess in Arcadia—and stopped in the beginning.

"It was a favourite of mine when I was in the world," she said.

"You love the world, then?"

"I am sick with longing for it."

I led her to the window.

"Valerie, there it lies. Let us go and enjoy it together."

She did not answer, she did not even hear; she stood with her arms held out to the full moon, and her face bathed in its light.

"Come away," she said at length, almost fiercely; "I cannot bear it."

"Valerie, you have not answered me. Here is the balcony, there is my boat, the moon is overhead; let us go, my beloved."

"It is impossible."

"I am rich, I have a noble name, and, above all, I love you—I love you, Valerie! Come, let us leave this haunt of evil spirits. Ah, love, life is so short at best, let us be happy while we may."

"I implore you——"

"Valerie, why do you hesitate! Are you afraid?"

She made a gesture of disdain.

"Afraid? Is fear, then, the one thing that keeps us from our desires? Ah, you have not learnt life's lesson well. I tell you it is impossible, and that is enough."

"It is not enough. Love is strong, Valerie, and whatever the spell that binds you, I swear that I will break it."

She covered her face with her hands and sobbed; I stole my arm about her waist, and laid her head against my shoulder.

"At least, my sweet, nothing shall drive me from you," I whispered.

She broke away from me and stood with her arms folded upon her breast; she fastened her burning eyes upon mine; there was a look in them that was almost hope.

"Do you love me, then?"

"With my whole soul."

"How much would you resign for my sake?"

"Life—everything—my hopes of Heaven."

"What would you dare for me?"

"Death itself."

"Are you at peace with God, monsieur?"

"Alas, I fear not; it is many years since I confessed."

At this moment there was a knock at the door; no one seemed to hear it. The girl crossed the room—ah, with what grace!—and filled a glass with the dark red wine. A second knock; I observed that the hand of Valerie trembled as she gave me the brimming glass. A third knock; I raised the glass to my lips, and nodded across its brim to the woman I loved. I am a judge of wines; the bouquet of this was indescribably delicious.

"I drink to an eternity together," I cried.

Here the door swung open heavily, with a creaking of rusty hinges, and upon the threshold stood a young and fair-haired man.

He made a courtly bow. "Pardon," he said, in a low voice full of melody, "but the cock has already crowed for day. We must be travelling. Ah, I see, monsieur is about to give a toast. Do not let me interrupt, I beg. I assure you, monsieur, the wine is excellent."

The Count and Countess had risen and stood as though waiting. Their old faces wore expressions of profound despair, their arms hung lifeless at their sides. The money and cards lay in disorder upon the table. The candle burnt dimly, flaring up now and then with a spluttering noise. It could not last much longer.

With a cry, Valerie sprang forward and dashed the wine-glass from my lips. It fell to the floor with a crash.

"Do not touch it!" she cried. "For the love of God, leave this unholy place at once. Forget all that has happened, if you hope for salvation!"

The strange young man smiled mystically.

"Mademoiselle is unselfish," said he. "But come, we delay," and he held wide the door, while the Count, the Countess, and Valerie passed through.

"Farewell, monsieur," said the Countess, and waved her hand.

"Farewell," said the Count.

But Valerie never said a word. Not once did she look at me, but passed on with her head upon her breast, out into the darkness.

Then the young man turned to me with a smile of charming frankness.

"Monsieur, permit me to say that I am glad of this meeting. We are not strangers, but old comrades. Do you remember that night at Biarritz, when you won five hundred thousand francs from the Marquis? I was there and applauded. I was also present at the duel next day—unobserved, of course. And now a word in your ear, *mon ami*, you are *épris* with Mademoiselle Valerie; you wish to see her again; *bien!* I will help you. Be here at the château one year from to-night—last night, I should say. Madame la Comtesse will be glad to receive you. For your sake, I regret that she does not entertain more often. And now, *au revoir!* I do not say farewell, since we part to meet again." He bowed and closed the door.

There was a curious charm about this strange young

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man—the air of a poet, a diplomat, a great general. I liked him. I cautiously opened the door and peered out. Darkness and silence.

"Valerie!" I called. "Valerie!"

My voice reverberated along the deserted halls; rats scampered away, terrified. This was all I heard, except—ah, no, I imagined it—the sound of a muffled sob a great way off.

I took the candle and searched the house—room after room, corridor after corridor; all were furnished, but all had the air of having been long untenanted; everywhere rats fled before my invasion. At length I returned to the salon.

My candle had spun a winding sheet; it flared up for the last time and went out. I threw open an eastern window, and, lo! the pale dawn was coming up across the water, and the wind had died into a soft breeze that smelt of the morning! Oh, the blessed day! How welcome after such a night!

As I pulled my boat across the water, I looked back at the old château. There it stood among its guardian trees, veiled by a thin mist which ascended from the marsh like steam. The first rays of the rising sun had tinted the mist a pale rose colour, the marsh was visibly green, the song of a bird in a bush by the water's side enchanted my very soul. I felt almost light-hearted. But, oh, Valerie! a year is so long, so long!

Arrived at the little village I sought the curé, a pious man, well read in the history of the province. At my request, he told me the story of the château on the island. This is it:

"In the year 1785, the only living representatives of the powerful and wealthy family of Saint-Germain were the old Count, his wife, their granddaughter and heiress, Valerie, and Eugène, their nephew and next of blood. The Count held some high post at court, I believe. Valerie was *dame de compagnie* to the Queen; and I have no doubt that they were all quite as worldly as most people of their rank and day. Eugène was a villain, a *roué*, a man entirely without honour; and yet, they say, he was loved by his beautiful cousin. Ah, my son, I count the love of woman no compliment since she can give it to a man like this.

"Well, the Count—or, possibly, the Countess—for some reason unknown, lost favour at court, and it became necessary to quit Versailles. This island, the ancient seat of the family, was their place of refuge. It is said that these people, accustomed as they were to a life of gaiety and dissipation, found the château rather dull. Whist was their one amusement; the old people had a great passion for the game, and they often played all night till dawn, it is said.

"It appears that Eugène was heavily in debt. He appealed to his uncle. Help was refused; then, in desperation, he drove a bargain with the devil." Here the curé crossed himself. "This was the unholy compact: *Great wealth in exchange for three souls.* It was the part of Eugène to put out of the world three souls—three souls unrepentant and unshriven. This is what they say, my son. All I know is that one morning the servants found the Count, his wife, and Mdlle. Valerie sitting round the card-table in the grand salon, cold in death. The Count was in the act of trumping his opponent's ace; the Countess had fallen forward on her nose, her fingers still clutching the cards; and the eyes of mademoiselle—she had beautiful eyes, I am told—were turned towards the vacant chair. That this chair was vacant is a significant fact.

"The wine had been drugged with a subtle and instantaneous poison, and, it is said, has never been removed; the decanter still stands on a small table in the grand salon. Well, Eugène, guilty or not, inherited the old man's wealth, but never returned to the island indeed, though many years have passed and generations come and gone since that fatal day, those gloomy halls have never echoed the footfall of mortal man. The peasants shun the place, for there runs a tradition that to pass one night there—the night of the anniversary of the crime—is to lose your soul.

"And now comes the strangest part of the story. Upon this anniversary—the time of year is not clearly known—from dusk till dawn, the devil"—the pious father crossed himself again—"allows those three lost souls to revisit their mortal habitation and divert themselves with their favourite game, and, it is said, they always leave a game unfinished for fear lest the privilege be withdrawn.

"That is the story. I cannot vouch for it; I can only affirm that, once or twice, I have seen strange lights glimmering across the water. But your scientists have many ways of accounting for such phenomena. The fate of those three was sad, indeed. If they had lived a few years longer, they would have met another as sad, perhaps, but more noble, for the Saint-Germain were loyal. Ah, well for me, I do not fear the dead, and the bones of these have been dust a hundred years in the great vaults under the château. May Our Lady plead for them!"

The curé ceased speaking, and I told him my story. He listened with great interest.

"My son," he cried, seizing my arm, "you will not return to the island? Do you know who it was who tempted you?"

"I know."

"Then, for the love of Our Lady, and all the saints, be warned! Valerie, whom you say you love, is—at this moment—burning in Hades!"

"Love is stronger than the fear of Hades."

"My son, my son, may Heaven protect you, for you stand in danger of losing your soul!"

"Father, it is lost already!" And I staggered out of the house into the street like a man in a dream.

N. A. Cox.

Be Sure Your Handwriting Will Find You Out.

OF recent years Graphology has developed to a remarkable pitch. Exhaustive study in the subject has resulted in its being classed as one of the arts. The true character of a person may be discerned in a few strokes of the pen, where attempts to discover it have failed in every other direction. You may think yourself a really nice sort of person, and your friends and acquaintances may think so, too, but you ought not to rest satisfied until you have had the opinion of the most expert graphologist of the present time. This will cost you the nominal expenditure of six penny stamps and a stamped and addressed envelope, all of which must be enclosed in an envelope with a specimen of your handwriting upon an unruled sheet of paper with your usual signature and full name and address, and forwarded to these offices. The truths which will be revealed to you need not necessarily be flattering—it depends upon your real character. Those who have faith will be delighted; and those who are sceptical will be surprised.

GRAPHOLOGIST,

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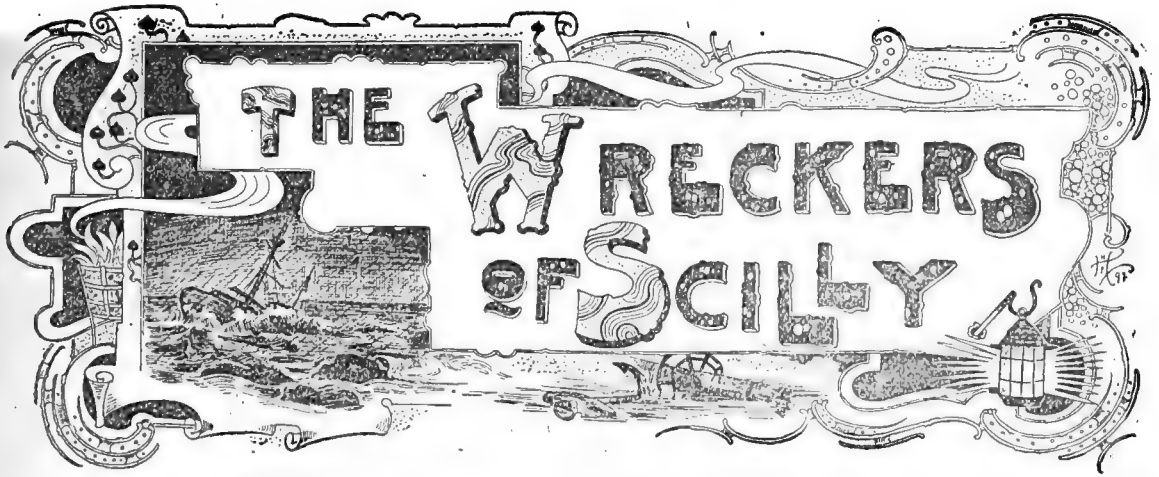

SUMMARY.

The scene is laid at St. Agnes, one of the Scilly Islands. The inhabitants live by the booty obtained from vessels wilfully led to destruction by false beacons. The only two exceptions are Nigel Prideaux and Damaris Nance, his sweetheart. Manuel Nance, Damaris' father, is Nigel's greatest enemy. The *King Hal*, a warship laden with Spanish plunder, is lured to destruction, and wrecked off Troy Town. All hands are either drowned in the sea or killed by the inhabitants, except Sir Francis Seymour, who is rescued by Nigel. Damaris takes food to the survivor, who falls in love with her. Nigel secures Sir Francis' escape. Manuel Nance decides to give his daughter in marriage to one of the sons of Governor Layton, and for this purpose sends one of his men to convey the offer. The big dowry which is to accompany the girl creates dissention among the Governor's six sons, and they decide to swim across to the island on which she lives, the first arrival to become her husband. Damaris, however, strenuously objects to the marriage.

CHAPTER IX.

The Wedding Day.

It was an unforgettable day that dawned for St. Agnes on the 26th of June, 1539.

A bank of cloud, dark, with ragged edges, lay in the south-west when the sun rose to shine on the placid sea, and the grey, thatched cottages set in the deep-coloured grass of the island. But it was so distant, and the breeze had such a gentle, murmurous note, that even the islanders most versed in weather lore took no heed of it. The blue Atlantic lapped the stones of St. Warna's Bay with a cooing sound that was of itself a lullaby.

But the shattered hull of the *King Hal* still stood against the rocks of Troy Town as a witness to the fickleness of the beautiful sea; and the fresh splinters and bits of iron, fragments of clothes, half a boat, and much else which littered the strand gave further testimony in the same direction.

Once again Damaris woke to hear the pleasant sound of the chink of gold. The sun beamed in upon her and made a crimson pool where its rays settled on the Turkey mat which was set over the hay upon the floor. But the sound of the gold filled the girl with a chilly terror. She knew well that it was her marriage portion that was being reckoned; and she feared that heaven might not befriend her after all.

No sooner did she begin to bestir herself than her father entered her room. There was that in his face that saddened Damaris yet more than her own presentiment.

"We shall part, my daughter, shall we not, with some sorrow?" he said.

"I know not wherefore we should part at all, dear father," replied the girl, and, but half-robed as she was (for she had not called to her nurse), she put her arms about Master Nance.

"Oh, cheer thee, cheer thee! A day will make much difference to my little Damaris, I warrant. By St. Nicholas, thou'lt like thy lot of matron full as well as thy dull days here!"

"I will not wed him, father—I will not wed him—though he marry me with chains," she sobbed.

"As touching that, my obstinate maid, time shall show. But, mark thee, I'll not endure thy moodiness. An thou art not Mistress Layton the younger ere nightfall I'll cast thee forth from thy nest here. By the thunder which trumpets the good things coming for us of St. Agnes, I rejoice I have but one daughter to plague me with her ingratitude and humours. I warrant, my wench, if thou dost not display thy sweeter parts—and thou hast them—thy husband is not one to beg thee to be gracious. There be they who flog their wives

Put her arms about the smooth neck of her favourite Nell.

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into dutifulness, and, marry, it answers well with dispositions like thine. So no more of this; thou art to be wedded this afternoon, and thy friend, Father Harris from Tresco, has the word to be here to tie the knot."

While he spoke the face of Manuel Nance reflected the working of his mind. For the moment he had forgotten his determination to wash out the memory of some of his past crimes by a more lawful future. His veins had swelled, and it was all he could do to keep from striking Damaris in his unmanageable passion.

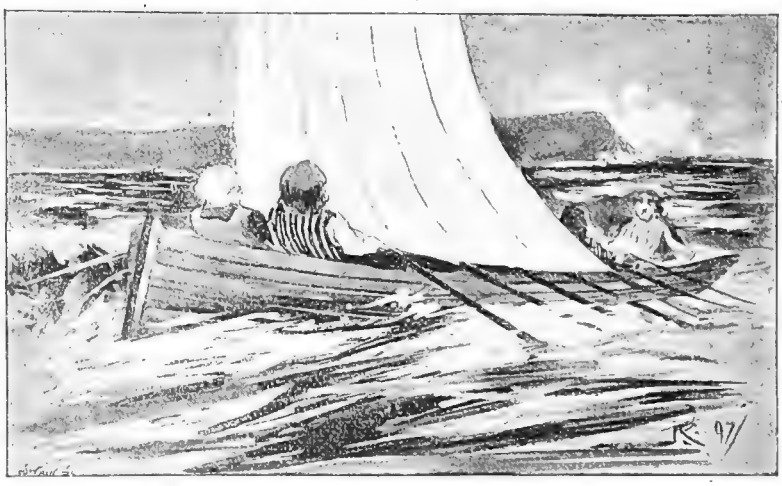
He returned to his room, and the girl, very sad at heart, finished dressing herself as best she could. She would go forth into the open—that was the most effective balm for distress. Under the blue dome of heaven and with the cool air fanning her, she ever regained her spirits in a measure.

Her steps took her towards her kine, and, to the amazement of the patient beast, she put her arms about the smooth neck of her favourite Nell and cried upon its coat.

"Come weal, come woe, dear ones, you and I must part!" she sobbed.

Then she left them and wandered on in the bright morning sunshine, with the happy twitter of birds about her and the glitter of the sunlit dew on the grass.

And so at length she reached the little inlet wherein Nigel's boat, *The Nell*, rocked lightly at anchor but a fathom from the cliffs.



Did not therefore desist from pulling through the bay.

"Here will I bide till he comes!" she said to herself.

Nor had she long to wait. For the night had been a restless and weary one for Nigel, and he yearned for the events of the day to begin even as Damaris feared them.

When he saw that she had been weeping, he took her in his arms with a passionate pressure, and kissed her cheeks where they were stained with the passage of her tears.

"Thou wouldst not have me give thee up?" he asked anxiously.

"If thou didst my heart would break—for I have but thee," she whispered.

"Good, my Damaris. Then I am content. Hearken. In an hour or two all the men folk start hence for Hugh Town, to bring over Master Layton with a flourish. I am to be with them; but that will I not be. Come hither, my Damaris, and peep into my fairy cave."

With that he led her to a well-dissembled hole between some granite boulders, and showed her his store of provisions, with a spare sail, cushions for his mistress, an extra rudder and pair of oars, knives, a pistol and much else.

"By the aid of these, my precious, and God's help, we will leave St. Agnes behind us and adventure upon the broader mercy of the world."

"But how, Nigel, shall it come about?"

"Listen. To avoid going with the rest, I will straightway put out as if I were after the mackerel. For the time I will be by Annet, where I can see them make their start. They will say hard things of me, but for that, my sweet, of course we care not. But when they are well across—then with both my arms and all my life I'll row hitherwards. Wilt thou be here to join me?"

"If I be not dead, look for me. Even my nurse will for once be kind."

"'Tis well. Thus met, we will not soon be parted, my life's blood. And dress thyself, dearest, for a journey instead of a bridal—though it will be both in one."

There was already an echo of uproar in the village when Damaris regained her father's house. It was not often there was even a funeral in St. Agnes—save such as the men of the *King Hal* had: a wedding was, of course, rarer still. The women and girls were, therefore, hard at work, some mixing paste for the cakes of the wedding feast, and some gathering flowers to bespread the shingle where young Layton was to tread on landing, and at the door of his bride's dwelling.

The men, too, were in high spirits. It had been noised about that Master Nance himself would soon follow his daughter out of the island. He was not loved; and he would not be much lamented. Moreover, would not his pastures and house, as well as the wealth that was in it, accrue naturally to them? This was an established custom in St. Agnes. The emigrant might take away as much as he could carry in a boat—the rest was for those who stayed behind.

There was further the exciting thought: Who should be their chief when Nance had gone? Some held that Pender should take the dignity, but others were of opinion that the office should be filled by a regular election, which might raise another than Pender to the sovereignty.

Master Nance summoned them all together, as he was wont, and gave them his instructions. They were, without exception, to accompany him—in the big sailing-boat, which was only used on great occasions, such as the boarding of a ship on a distant rock, or to fight a Spaniard or a Frenchman whom they could take at a disadvantage. In this way the Governor of St. Mary's would have due honour paid to him, and Master Nance himself would be fitly homaged.

So busy were they, and full of chatter, that they did not much heed the lowering nature of the sky. This had changed greatly since the dawn. The clouds had browed thick from the south-west, and there was a lurid tinge to them which told of the storm of which they were heralds. The closeness of the air also argued of a possible outbreak of some severity.

Master Nance himself was concerned with the care of a certain important little oaken case, in which were the five thousand pieces of gold, without which he feared he might not bring back the bridegroom.

At length all things were ready, and the men trooped

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down to the shingle by Perkilla Bay. The boat was ready, but it was marked that those who had taken charge of her had delayed to unbind the sails. They stood looking about them—at the sea and the sky, as if uncertain what to do.

"Devil take them!" exclaimed Nance, when he noticed this, "what is the hindrance?"

"'Tis the day, Master Nance, I'm of opinion," answered one of the men; "we be like to have a capful, by the look of it."

Then for the first time that morning Nance, too, gazed about him as a mariner should.

He frowned when he saw the shape of the south-west clouds and the colour of the sea south of the Gugh.

"Holy fiend!" he exclaimed, but he said no more.

"Oh, it may not be so bad," continued the man who had drawn his attention to it. "And for me, who have no wenches to get husbands for, it matters not."

But Nance heeded not this stroke of satire. He was still intent on the heavens. At length he turned away, with a forced laugh and a heave of the shoulders.

"I trow," he said, "if we be fated to make well through it, no puff of wind shall arrest us. All aboard her, men, and ho! ho! off with her. We'll have her mainsail up in a pistol shot, and there'll be breeze enough to land us with Master Layton ere a third of an hour has gone."

"And for getting back, Master Nance, in the teeth of that?" observed Fortescue, pointing to the cloud.

"Oh, what the demon avails it to think so far ahead! That's my merry lads, slip her out quick as a flash of lightning. Who knows what shall come to pass? For me, I've shipped the tiller of my life, and mean to sit in the stern of the boat till judgment day."

The other St. Agnes men stared at their lord, but did not therefore desist from pulling through the bay to get into the wake of the wind. Nance's red face and unusually bright eyes were certainly somewhat odd, and he moved his fingers nervously, like a man who had not full control over them. But it was not until they had turned the easternmost point of the bay, and a sudden howl of wind caught them at the head of Gugh channel, that they had serious doubts about their master's sanity. The squall took them unprepared and all but drove them over. For several moments there was confusion—and in the thick of it, with the men bustling each other on to the windward gunwale, what should Master Nance do but roar out lustily their St. Warna's chorus:

"Huzza for the rocks it splits upon,
And hey for the corpse with its gewgaws on!"

He shouted it several times, embracing his box of crown pieces the while, and with his gaze concentrated upon the bellied sail.

The others, with looks at each other and low mutterings, drew away from him, so that he was left alone in the stern of the boat. As the ship plunged in the heavy swell the waves broke over him. But this did not seem to affect his delirium. He sang on, though drenched to the skin.

Some of the men were now for turning back while they had a point of wind in their favour.

"It bodes us ill," said one of these, "to go into a squall like yon" (pointing to the waves of the Sound beyond the Gugh) "with a witless man, and he with the tiller in his hands."

"Master Nance," cried another, "be you careful, we request of you."

But though they tried to argue him into giving up the helm, he would have none of them. With a flash of momentary intelligence, he bade them retake their places, and cleverly drove the boat over the tops of the waves.

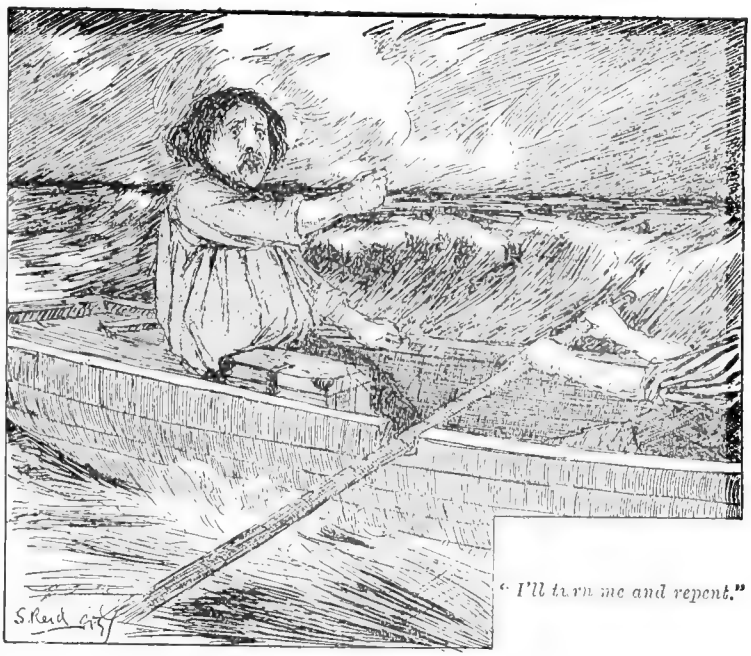
"I'm master shipman here, by the Heaven that made us, and I'll brook no meddling. Are we all aboard?"

"Every man and boy of St. Agnes, Nigel Prideaux, his idiot boy, and little Obadiah excepted," answered one.

"Ah! a murrain on that Prideaux youth. Why haled you him not along of us? I have my fears of him. Zounds, and he may be with her at this moment! 'Bout ship, I say, and back to St. Agnes. I'll not endure e'en such a chance as that."

Vain was it for Pender to shout that he had seen Nigel cross the Sound towards Annet with his tackle on board.

"I'll not credit it—ye're all against me, you rats. I'm cheated by earth and heaven and Damaris and Master Layton. What cares he for me, forsooth? 'Tis the crowns he marries, not the flesh and blood of my sweet child. Marry, how I've misused her—but not"—this with a shriek that made even these well-nerved men start to their feet—"as I might have done. I'll turn me and repent."



"I'll turn me and repent."

Several of the others flew towards him to prevent the disaster that was impending. There was a riot of cursing. And then the boat, having been strongly placed broadside against the storm, was tossed over like a feather, and men and sails were all interningled in the waves. Master Nance's mocking yell of laughter as the sea broke over the boat once more was the last sound that the gulls overhead might have recorded of these doomed men of St. Agnes.

They did not all go to the bottom at once. Certain of them could swim, and swim bravely. But these were either so hampered by the others, or by the ropes and sails of the boat, or so oppressed by the fury of the waves, that they soon succumbed. They failed even to reach the reef of St. Bartholomew, which stands midway in the channel between St. Agnes and St. Mary's.

The gulls screamed above them, and one by one they gave in and died.

All this happened out of sight of St. Agnes, for the women folk had their labour to attend to, nor did the islanders of St. Mary's chance to notice what had befallen

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the ship, though some had marked its starting, and anon questioned each other as to its fate with anxiety.

Towards noon the Tresco monastery boat safely ran into Hugh Town, yet not without grave peril, and after much laborious beating against the wind. Father Harris was on board her, but he learnt that the St. Agnes men had not appeared. To St. Mary's it seemed natural that the storm should have made Master Nance return home in haste. The waves were of a fearful size, and their bellowing off Porth Hellick and Peninis could be heard two miles away.

Not until the evening did St. Agnes have any intimation of the calamity that had come upon them. With much sighing and sorrow the women had been forced to agree that the marriage would have to be deferred. Dame Cochran said so—not without glee that seemed quite ribald. She understood the sea better than the rest, and unless the wedding party meant to marry death himself, she said they would not dream of trying to return to St. Agnes in the teeth of the gale.

But towards the time of sunset, when the storm was at its worst, young Nigel landed on the island, soaked, and with the strength almost beat out of him. It had taken him ten hours to toil through a couple of miles of sea, even with the shelter of the St. Agnes coast from the wind. A little more and he would have given it up, and accepted his fate.

"Ill news!" he blurted out to the first comer who met him, and then he reeled and swooned into the woman's arms.

"Look here," cried Dame Cochran to poor, agitated little Damaris, "here's a lively armful."

So saying, she dropped Nigel upon the floor of Master Nance's house with a laugh, and went her way.

Silently, but with agony at the heart, Damaris bent over her lover. He was so wet and pallid that she doubted not he was drowned. Had she not again and again gone to the cave where they were to meet, and each time in vain? At length she had no longer hope that they could voyage in such a storm as prevailed. That was grievous enough. But (the later thought that it was because her lover was lost had already—when the nurse appeared—begun to stab her like a poisoned knife.

Sped homewards as fast as he could go.

So she fell upon Nigel, and wept on his breast, and called him all the tender names and more by which he had called her, and caressed him, and bathed his cold face with her hot tears.

Until, lo! when her sorrow was at its intensest, he opened his eyes, and his lips smiled at her. Then in a moment she became as pale as he had been, and she leapt to her feet in astonishment that was half terror. But Nigel reassured her.

"Thou art the best of apothecaries, dear one."

Whereupon her tears wetted him again, though this time they were tears of joy, and when she had said many foolish, fond things, she tended him like the most careful of nurses until he was able to get up and tell her of the calamity that her father and the others had encountered.

This also overwhelmed the poor girl. But, with her head nestled on Nigel's breast—it was very damp; but what mattered that, seeing how copious were her tears?—she at length took comfort of a sort. It was worse for the others than for her. She still had Nigel, but they, poor souls! had lost fathers and husbands and sons and brothers all at a stroke.

By this time all St. Agnes knew what had happened. Little Obadiah, while playing in the surf of Perkilla Bay, where the strand shelved most gradually, was amazed and enchanted almost out of his infant wits to perceive a thing that proved to be a dead body come coquettishly towards him. At one instant it was nearly within his reach; but even while he was stretching his little bared arms towards it, the jealous sea fetched it away again. So the game lasted for a while. But anon, with a mighty heave, the Atlantic dashed it well on to the stones, and when the wave receded there it stayed.

"A pin for a man and a pin for a boy,
And two pins more for the saint at the helm."

yelled the little urchin as he capered round the body. It was sadly beaten and scarred by the sharp granite rocks, and the clothes were three parts stripped from it.

"Huzza for the rocks it splits upon,
And hey for the corpse with its geegaws on!"

Whether it was due to infantile greed, or mere curiosity, or the association of the words of the hymn of St. Warna, something impelled the little lad to examine more closely the poor drowned man who had been tossed up specially, as it seemed, for his entertainment.

Holding his breath, and with the wind in his long hair, he trod on tiptoe towards the derelict find, not without anxiety (for never before had he been allowed to finger prey of this kind), touched the arm, where it was bent across the body. Even as he did so he disturbed the equilibrium of the corpse, so that it rolled over towards him with the face fully uncovered.

The lad uttered a horrible, piercing scream and sped homewards as fast as he could go. Nor did he stop his wails until he was at his mother's knee.

It was his own father that the Atlantic had bruised and thrown to him.

(To be concluded.)

Young Nigel landed on the island.

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Answers to Correspondents.

J. E. T. thinks that it would be a good plan to publish a book of reproductions of photographs of the different statues to be found in London, together with a brief account of their history.——Such a volume would be interesting to a few people. A portfolio of drinking-fountains or of railway-stations would be just as much appreciated by the man in the street.

E. W. C. B.—(1 and 2). An accident must happen to the train in which the person is travelling. (3.) The coupon must either be signed or an annual subscription to *P.W.* paid, and the newsagent's receipt forwarded to us.

HOUSEKEEPER.—The best thing to use in cleaning satin furniture is fresh breadcrumbs. Rub them over the satin until they grow discoloured, and then dust off the remaining crumbs with a soft cloth.

J. M.—Your schemes for the destruction of snakes in India are very elaborate, but I am afraid that they are not worth patenting.

I. P. has been very much struck with the number of ladies who are to be found at nearly every football match of importance. He is anxious to know whether there is any likelihood of women developing a craze for this pastime similar to that developed by the male sex. "We don't hear anything of the Ladies' Football Club nowadays," he says, "but the interest centred in the men players will, I am mortally afraid, become as morbid and unladylike as cycling."——Although there does actually appear to be an increase of lady spectators at football matches, both big and small, there need be no reason to deplore this fact. It is, after all, a healthy interest, and the play is to a certain extent rendered better by the knowledge on the part of the players that the eyes of their sweethearts and their wives are watching their movements with a critical interest.

W. W. (Gibraltar).—The different navies of the world were represented at the Chicago Exhibition by models only. There is no waterway for a vessel of 1,000 tons between Chicago and the coast.

P. B. asks if it is possible for rubies to lose their colour.——It is quite possible, although a somewhat infrequent occurrence. Should a gem of this kind be exposed to the light continuously for, say, a couple of years, it will become perceptibly lighter in tint.

GRACE.—Thanks for your letter. The trunks of trees which are covered with moss or lichen are more liable to lightning strokes than those which are not.

C. L. N. is an amateur photographer, and wants to know how he can print out weak spots in his negatives.————Concentrate the sun's rays on the dense part of the negative with the aid of a large reading-glass. Do not allow the focus to become too small, and move it slowly to and from the negative in order not to form a round spot.

J. M. W.—Perhaps the chief manufacturers of piano organs are Messrs. Chiappa and Sons Limited, 6, Little Bath Street, E.C.

MISS LANG is making preparations for a dance, and has just received the last reply to her invitations. The fact that only twenty gentlemen accepted, while thirty-seven ladies agreed to come, out of an equal number of invitations despatched, leads Miss Lang to wonder if the dancing man is becoming an extinct animal——Your experience does not seem to be at all uncommon. Cases of the same sort are becoming more frequent every year. Men are beginning to realise that, after all, dancing is but a waste of time, and they are certainly becoming more moderate in this direction. They fail to see the humour of rushing home, hustling into dress clothes, tearing off to a hall, hunting up partners, getting hot, feeding on ices, tarts, and other unsubstantial, indigestible food, talking ball-room babble, going out into the cold air at midnight, and getting up the next morning stuffy and totally unfit for work. When a man goes to a dance, it is not in human nature for him to take things calmly and moderately; consequently, he is beginning to prefer not to go at all.

MECHANIC.—There is no such company or syndicate as you mention, so far as I know, either in London or any other part of the United Kingdom.

W. W. D. R.—More than ninety per cent. of railway passengers in England travel third class. They contribute about eighty-three per cent. of the receipts.

A. S. T.—To cure broken chilblains apply a little vaseline every night till healed, and then use the following embrocation. Those unbroken should be anointed with a little of the following embrocation every night till the chilblains disappear: The embrocation is made by breaking a fresh hen's egg into a bottle, and adding to it (very gradually) a quarter of a pint of turpentine, when thoroughly mixed add half a pint of vinegar very slowly. This mixture, which will be found to keep well, should be shaken before use.

E. C. W.—The puzzle you send is only an adaptation of a very old one. Many thanks, however, for giving me the opportunity of seeing it.

F. R. M.—The next century commences on January 1st, 1901.

MR. JAMES LINGARD has sent me particulars regarding a patent balance valve saucepan cover. The object of this novelty is to prevent water from boiling over, and it does so on the same principle which guards against the possibility of a locomotive boiler exploding—by allowing the steam to escape. The address of the manufacturer is 235, Earl's Street, Longsight, Manchester.

MEAT extracts are common enough. A vegetable extract is a novelty, but it is a novelty with some sterling merit. It is made entirely from vegetable substances which, after being ground and mixed, are reduced by machinery to an extract. The stuff is very palatable and nourishing. The jars and bottles cost from 7½d. upwards, and may be obtained from Fromm's Extract Company, 61½, Fore Street, London, E.C.

THE Pneumatic Compensation cycle is the result of five years' experimenting in applying the pneumatic principle to the frame of the cycle instead of to the wheel. This point has been gained at last, giving far greater resiliency than the pneumatic tyre and without the usual danger of puncturing, side slipping, etc., which has attended the progress of the pneumatic tyre, and this is obtained without destroying the rigidity or stability of the frame, getting rid of the whole of the vibration generated in the machine itself, as well as at the point of contact. Another new feature is that the machine can be taken to pieces into three sections and packed in a portmanteau in a few minutes, without the aid of tools, and taken as personal luggage, thus doing away with the great risk of injury in transit and at the same time saving the annoyance of special booking and the heavy charges of railway companies. This may not be the accepted machine but it is undoubtedly the forerunner of the proper application of pneumatics to cycles. The offices of the company are at 52, Queen Victoria Street, E.C.

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or "Maggots," Pimples, Blotches, etc., immediately and permanently removed by my Skin Cleansing Lotion, "CUTTICURINE." Never fails. Hundreds of testimonials. Post free with directions, 1/6, 3/- and 5/-. AUSTIN LENNOX, Skin Specialist, 1, Shoe Lane, Fleet Street, LONDON.

TOO THIN IN THE BUST.

Ladies desiring any improvement in this direction should send me stamp for free particulars of a simple, inexpensive, harmless self-treatment, whereby a *full natural bust* can be obtained. Address, in confidence, Mrs. B. K. NORRIS, 7, Addington Crescent, York Road, London, S.E.

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On receipt of stamped addressed envelope a lady will send to those afflicted with Superfluous Hairs, free particulars of a simple remedy which *permanently* removed a large growth from her sister's face without injuring the skin. Address, in confidence, Miss E. R. DALE, 26, Belvedere Rd., Lambeth, London.

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A lady who has permanently destroyed Superfluous Hairs on herself, will be happy to forward free, to all similarly afflicted, full particulars of a simple, inexpensive and harmless self-treatment. Send stamped addressed envelope in confidence to Mrs. "T. D.," 87, Strand, London.

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Permanently cured in a few days by a simple, inexpensive self-treatment. Particulars free on receipt of stamped addressed envelope to Dr. A. M. CURTIS, York Chambers, Adelphi, London, W.C.

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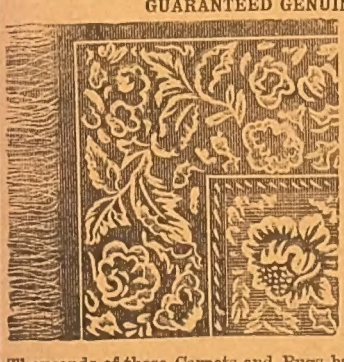

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9ft. by 10½ft.	8/6		12ft. by 15ft.	15/9
9ft. by 12ft.	9/6		12ft. by 18ft.	19/6
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